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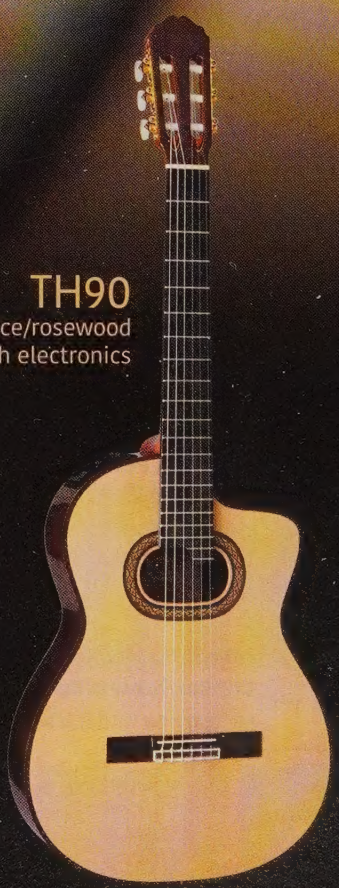

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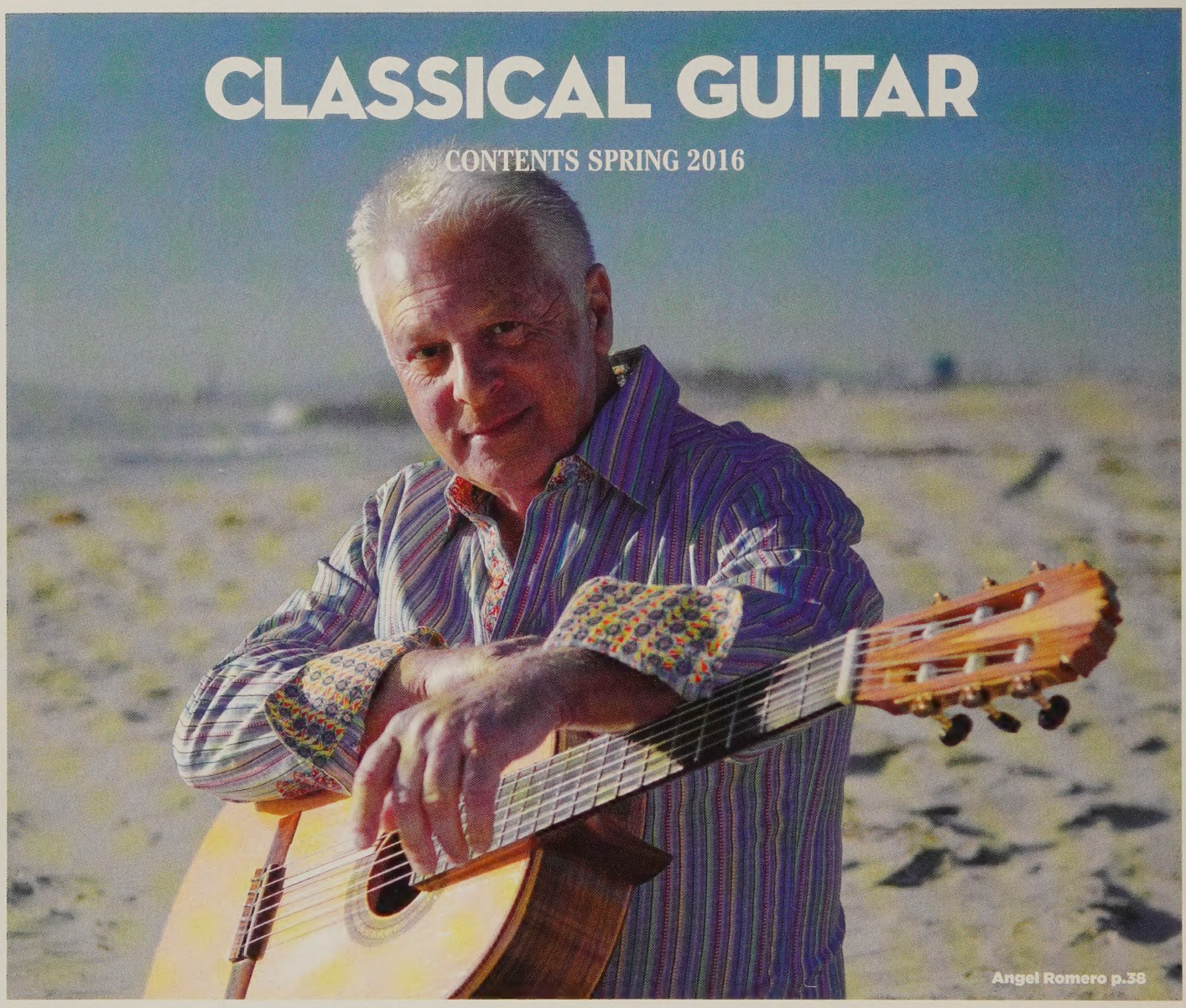

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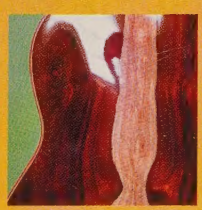
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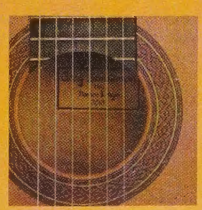
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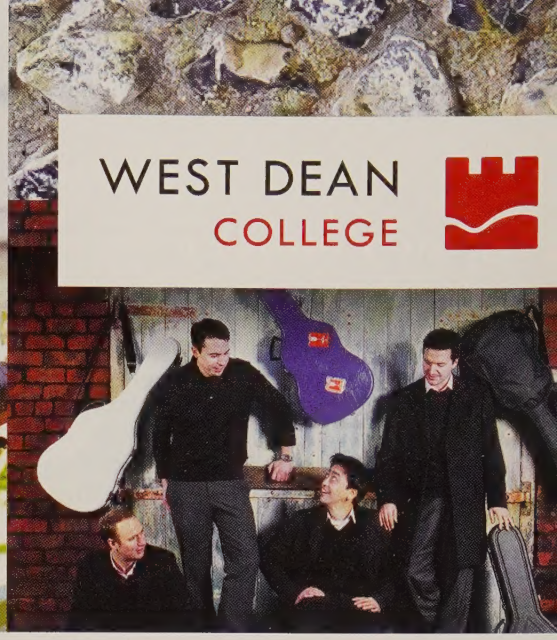

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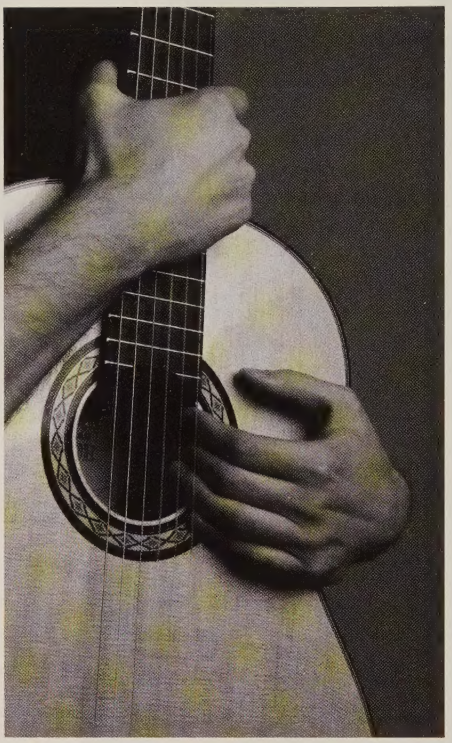
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

These are challenging times throughout the music industry. CD sales continue to plummet, and even online digital downloads, once a robust alternative to physical CDs, are vanishing with the arrival of a glut of new streaming services (Apple Music, Tidal, Microsoft Groove, et al, joining the once-unassailable Spotify) that offer only infinitesimal payouts to artists per play. Established pop acts complain that they make next to nothing even when their songs are streamed hundreds of thousands of times, so you can imagine what it's like for classical guitarists and their CDs—after all, this is a niche within a niche (classical music), with a small, specialized audience, often far from the mainstream.

Yet classical guitarists continue to make and market CDs (and/or offer downloads), selling a few here, a few there, hoping to someday break even or perhaps make a little profit, but mostly using the medium's still-considerable value as a promotional tool. In the meantime, there are many other avenues being taken by guitarists to patch together a living as a professional musician—a tough proposition in most times, but never tougher than right now.

This issue's Special Focus looks at the hard realities that face today's professional classical guitarists and discusses in practical terms some of the income streams they employ. Graham Wade's "Momentito" column offers an overview of the state of the profession, while my own article, "Obsession and Profession" has a number of guitarists and promoters speaking frankly—but anonymously—about what they make from concerts, recordings, publishing, and other sources. It's an interesting snapshot that is certain to open a few eyes. The section concludes with Montreal guitarist Antoine Berthiaume writing about the four years he spent as a traveling guitarist with Cirque du Soleil and Cavalia—an unconventional but steady job for a trained classical guitarist.



In some ways, every issue of *Classical Guitar* deals with making a living, with profiles often delving into the different facets of guitarists' careers. For several years, Lawrence del Casale even contributed a regular series of interviews called "Making a Living," which in part inspired this issue's Special Focus. The good news is that many classical guitarists are creative not just in their musical lives, but also as independent entrepreneurs finding new and sometimes unexpected ways to earn money. Mastering the economic intricacies of a performing career can be every bit as intimidating as conquering a particularly vexing passage in a daunting piece of music. But in the end it can be nearly as important, and it's often part of what separates highly talented amateurs from successful professionals.

—Blair Jackson
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GSI'S WINDFALL: THE RUSSELL CLEVELAND COLLECTION IS FOR SALE

Since its founding by Tim Miklaucic more than 30 years ago, Santa Monica, California-based Guitar Salon International (GSI) has been a leading proponent of classical and flamenco guitars and music, developing into one of the largest dealers of high-quality instruments in the world—in addition to putting on concerts, starting a guitar-education outreach foundation, and creating a record label.

The number of fantastic guitars that cycle through GSI over the course of a year is always something to behold, but in the fall of 2015, the company outdid itself when GSI purchased for resale 63 guitars from the famous Russell Cleveland collection. Cleveland's guitars, as many of you know, were immortalized in the seminal late-'90s book, *The Classical Guitar: A Complete History*, and he acquired a number of other instruments in the years since. The guitars span the years 1830–2011 and include such marquee items as Andrés Segovia's 1969 AM Ramirez, Julian Bream's 1957 Hauser II, an 1888 Torres, Robert Bouchet's first guitar from 1946, as well as many others by past and contemporary luthiers. Looking for a violin-shaped guitar by Thomas Humphrey, complete with f-holes instead of a regular sound hole? He only made one, and it's in the collection, as well as a couple more Humphreys.

"We're very excited about this," says GSI president David Collett, "but at the same time it's been a massive logistical challenge, because when we got these 63 guitars, we had to create photo schedules, video shooting schedules, some of the guitars need repairs—I have two different

FELIX SALAZAR PHOTOS

Opposite page: Dozens of Russell Cleveland's guitars arrive at GSI

Left: GSI president David Collett plays a 1929 Domingo Esteso

Below: Segovia's 1969 AM Ramirez

repair guys, one in San Diego and one in LA—and some just need to be cleaned up and maybe some setup work to get them all in sellable condition. We're going to take our time, rolling out a few at a time as they become ready. We've already had a lot of inquiries, since so many of these guitars are already well-known."

Take the Torres, for example. "There's famous picture of [Francisco] Tárrega playing a Torres and that guitar was made in 1888," Collett says. "I think the photo was taken in 1910, and it's [Torres number] SE 114. A couple of years ago we had 116—a couple of guitars away—and that was a guitar that got a lot of attention because Andrew York came in and recorded five or six videos and they went viral. The guitar we just got [from the Cleveland collection] is 115, so it's the one in between. It once belonged to Emilio Pujol's wife, and later it was used by Pujol. Before he died, he gave it to his niece and she ended up selling it, and it sold through her to Russell Cleveland in the late '90s."

Then there are the two Hauser II's, which are "very different from each other," Collett notes. "The '57 of Julian Bream is almost identical to the late Hauser I's from the late '40s and early '50s. But then we have another Hauser II from 1971 and it is wildly different, with a smaller body size—a little bit more like a Torres, lighter in weight—and it had all kinds of innovation internally, with the bracing that didn't exist in the '50s in Hausers."

There are stories behind every guitar in the collection. For more, check out guitarsalon.com/store. *—Blair Jackson*

A CG Twist from Bestselling Author

Love him or loathe him, writer Mitch Albom has amassed an enormous, worldwide following since his slight but uplifting book *Tuesdays With Morrie* stormed up the bestseller lists in 1997 on its way to selling 14 million copies in 41 languages. Albom has written several other books since, including four novels, the most recent of which, *The Magic Strings of Frankie Presto*, came out in November 2015.

Frankie Presto has a fantastical side to it. It tells the story of the (fictional) greatest guitarist who ever lived, including his encounters with various (real) famous musicians (it's been described as having a *Forrest Gump/Zelig* quality to it), and supposed testimonials from actual living musicians who claim to have known him/played with him, all told by a narrator described as "Music." Bold? Yes. Pretentious? Perhaps.

It is worth noting, however, that the Frankie Presto character has a background in classical guitar. He is born Francisco Presto in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and, as an infant, he is strangely quiet—he never cries, until, as a one-year-old, he hears a recording of Segovia playing Francisco Tárrega's "Lagrima."

A few years later, during World War II, Francisco takes up the guitar himself. His first instrument, at age seven, is a four-string braguinha. Then he switches to a six-string classical guitar, all the while taking lessons from a blind guitarist in his Spanish town.

To his credit, author Albom (who also is a musician) seems to know what he's talking about, discussing some of the mechanics of playing classical guitar, offering a small biographical profile of Tárrega, and marveling that young Francisco could master Villas-Lobos' etudes, flamenco *rasgueo*, etc. At a young age, Francisco is also swept away by recordings of Django Reinhardt and Duke Ellington, and eventually he moves to America, where "Frankie" encounters and plays with all sorts of musicians in different genres, helping shape modern popular music in the process.

After a long, illustrious career, Frankie retreats to the sidelines, and returns to his first love—classical guitar. In his retirement, he teaches classical guitar at the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines, but also returns to his native Spain to cheer on his daughter—herself an aspiring classical guitarist—in the Tárrega Competition (sorry, no spoilers here). It's inspirational and sentimental; both trademarks of Albom's work. **CG**

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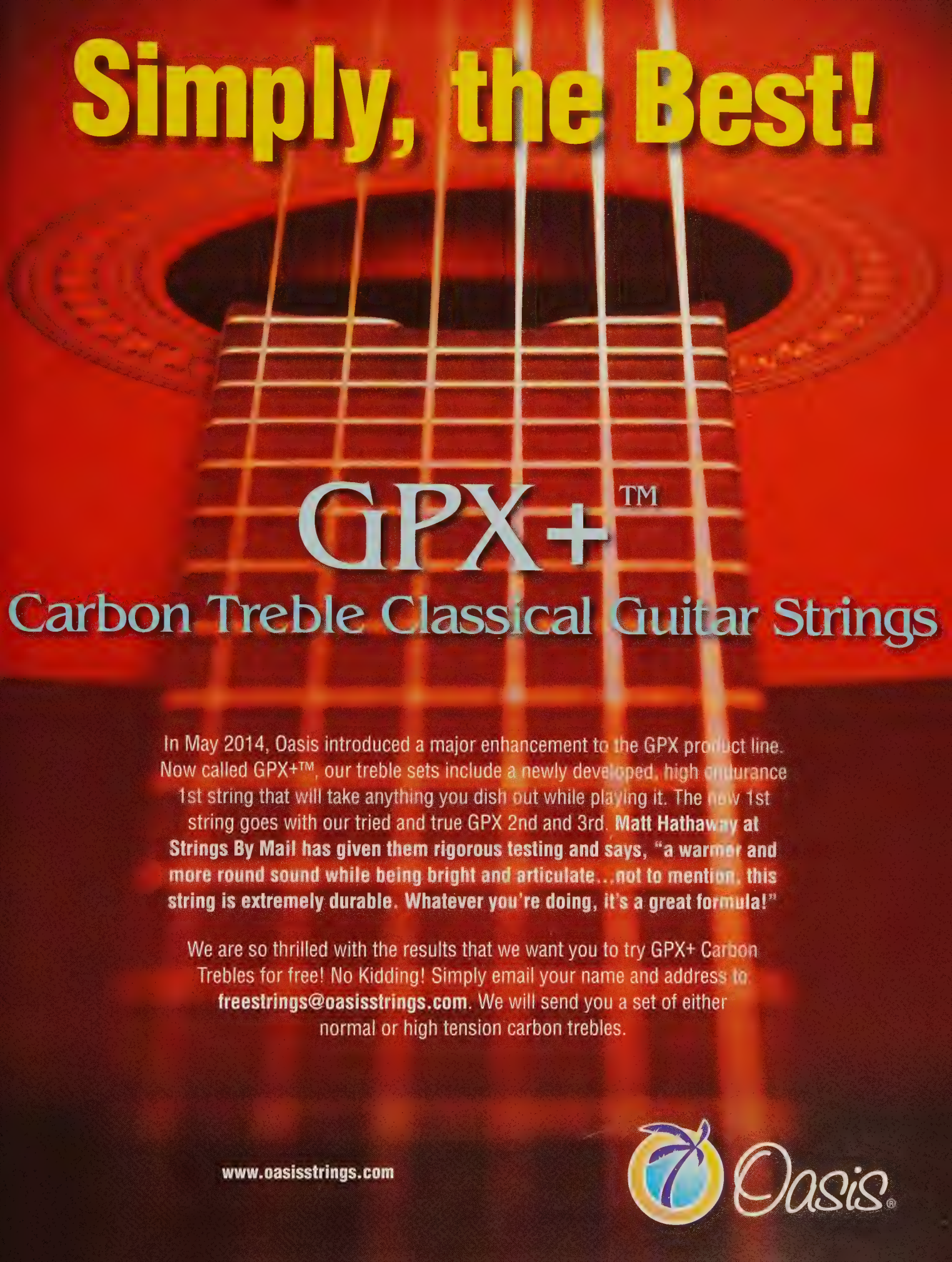
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FIELD TRIP

Seattle guitarist Hilary Field's new CD, *Premieres*, collects unrecorded pieces from an international group of composers

by Blair Jackson

KAREN MOSKOWITZ PHOTO

One of my favorite classical guitar CDs of 2015 was Hilary Field's *Premieres*, which was exactly what its title promised—first recordings of ten pieces by contemporary composers from all over the world, including Argentina, Chile, Poland, Russia, Greece, Australia, Brazil, and the US. Among the best-known names are Jorge Morel (who has two works on the disc), Richard Charlton (whose four-part *Suite Latina* is a highlight), the Brasil Guitar Duo's Douglas Lora, and the prolific Gerard Drozd. It's always something of a risk to hit an audience with an entire program of new music, but the Seattle, Washington-based Field chose the pieces carefully over a long period and made sure they reflected her own aesthetic, which has always leaned toward more lyrical and accessible works.

"I do love a good melody," she says by phone from her home. "I also appreciate more abstract music on some levels, but not as much inside my heart. In my heart I appreciate more lyrical music; that's what speaks most to me."

Field has had a particularly long relationship with the music of Jorge Morel, the brilliant Argentine composer/guitarist who has lived in New York for decades. All four of her instrumental albums since her 1992 debut, *Music of Spain and Latin America*, have included pieces by him: On that disc, his popular five-part *Sonatina*; the follow-up, *Ballad Stories*, included *Suite del Sur*, *Danzas Para Emiko,* and the world premiere of "Berceuse for Guitar and String Quartet"; her 2013 duo project with viola player Gwen Franz, *Airoso*, featured Morel's "Homage to a Dance," among works by Piazzolla, Bach, Telemann and others; and now *Premieres* has two lovely Morel works, *Suite for Olga* and *Echoes del Sur*.

Field credits Morel with helping shape her path as a guitarist. Growing up in Rosalyn and Brookville, Long Island, New York, she took violin lessons in early elementary school, but soon shifted to guitar. Once she discovered classical guitar in the sixth grade, Field decided she wanted to study the instrument seriously.

"I loved playing and the sound of the guitar," she says. "I loved that you play it with your hands and there was nothing between your hands and the strings and the music. I felt a very close connection to it. I was already reading music, so I picked up that aspect of it pretty quickly. And then I found teachers who encouraged me."

Beginning in high school, Field was shepherded by two exceptional and well-known teachers—Pasquale (Pat) Bianculli and Jerry Willard—whom she followed to the State University of New York at Stony Brook. "I learned the music that Pat and Jerry loved, which was a broad range," she says. "Jerry's done so many transcriptions and editing and fingering, and I got to watch him go through that process when I was growing up, with all the books he was developing."

In her late teenage years Field was particularly fond of playing Bach and other Baroque music, but says, "when I got a little older I heard the music of Jorge Morel for the first time and I was just blown away; I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was the kind of music where I just thought, 'I wish I wrote that; I *have* to play this music!' That was my instant reaction. So that was a strong pull for me.

"Morel combined the beautiful South American harmonies and soul with the structure of classical and sometimes Baroque music," Field adds. "I also liked the way it was structured like classical music but it still sounded so *free*. It sounded like you were creating a story as you were playing this music."

'I do love a good melody. I also appreciate more abstract music on some levels, but not as much inside my heart. In my heart I appreciate more lyrical music; that's what speaks most to me.'

Through the years, as Field championed Morel's work, she got to know him personally, so naturally, she approached him for her *Premieres* project. "I had learned his [unrecorded] *Suite for Olga*, which he wrote for his late wife," she says. "I went to visit him with my family, and I didn't have my guitar, so he gave me his guitar to play and I was playing his pieces for him. He had never really heard *Suite for Olga* played. He had written it, of course, but he doesn't play all the music that he writes, and he writes it by hand. So as I was playing, it was the first time he'd ever heard it played back to himself, and I remember this rush of energy I got from this—'Here I am in Jorge Morel's apartment, playing his guitar, playing his piece on his guitar for him.' It was a very exciting moment." A few weeks after that encounter, Morel wrote the two-part *Echoes del Sur* specifically for Field's *Premieres*.

Two other works on the disc are dedicated to Field. She had met the Chilean composer, guitarist, poet, and filmmaker Alberto Cumplido a few years ago when she played in Chile and Peru on a tour sponsored by the US Embassy. Cumplido contributed the gorgeous "Retrato Antiguo (a la memoria de John Dowland)" to *Premieres*. "When I told him about the project," Field says, "he said, 'I will write music for you—for your hands.'" In the case of *Premiere*'s closing meditation, "Reluctant Farewell," by Rick Sowash, "I actually met him by e-mail through a mutual friend," Field says. "He had composed some music for a friend, but he wanted the piece to be recorded, so they approached me. He's the only composer on this CD that's not actually a guitarist. He often writes chamber music and I think this piece came out beautifully well."

The other pieces on *Premieres* came through various channels. For instance, in the case of Charlton's marvelous *Suite Latina*, "Pasqaule [Bianculli] gave me a CD of flute-and-guitar music he and [his wife] Kathleen McDonald put out, and that had a Richard Charlton piece on it that I really loved, so I wrote to Mr. Charlton and he was very happy to have me look at some pieces he'd written that had not been

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VIEW FROM THE FRONT ROW

WHAT SHE PLAYS

Hilary Field's main guitar was built for her by Dake Traphagen of Bellingham, Washington.

"He doesn't number his guitars, he gives them names," she says. "That guitar's name is Bahia," perfect for a player with such an affinity for South American music. "I like the soulfulness of the music, and the lyricism. And it sounds so good on a nylon-string guitar; it suits the instrument so well."

recorded. My favorite was *Suite Latina*, which is so beautiful—it was like I'd heard it before, but it was still brand-new."

As for "Northeastern Lullaby," by Douglas Lora, "He's in the Brasil Guitar Duo and he comes to Washington State often to do classes, so I had met him, and I had heard him play that piece and I loved it. However, he had not written the music down, so I videotaped him playing it, he gave me some instructions about it, and then I took the video home and spent a long time hitting the 'play' and 'pause' buttons until I figured it out, and then I wrote it out."

And then there is Field's lone writing contribution, "Donzella: Fantasia on a Sephardic Lullaby," which is a creative extension on a traditional tune called "Durme Hermosa Donzella," which Field included on *Siente: Night Songs from Around the World*, a CD she recorded with singer Patrice O'Neill and a chamber ensemble. "I don't write as much as I would like," she comments.

"One of my future projects is to write more. I know it's not that common in classical music for people to compose and perform their own pieces. But when children learn to read, they get to write their own stories, too. So when people learn music, they can learn other people's music but they can also create their own. And understanding how *both* of those things are done will help you be a better interpreter."

Field moved to the Pacific Northwest in her 20s ("It's a much gentler place to live than New York," she says) and has been entrenched in Seattle's classical guitar world ever since. She was head of the guitar department at Seattle Pacific University and also at Pacific Lutheran University in nearby Tacoma.

"To make a living as a guitarist, you need to have a conglomeration of things that you do," she notes, "and the steadiest source of income for most people is teaching. I really enjoy teaching, sharing music, and watching my students grow and develop a love for music. I feel like I'm actually contributing something. It's always been a very important part of what I do."

For a number of years, Field mostly stayed close to home as she and her husband, Andrew Ratshin (of the folk trio Uncle Bonsai), raised their now-16-year-old daughter, Emma, who plays piano, viola, and ukulele "but does *not* want to play guitar," Field says with a chuckle. "There are plenty around the house if she changes her mind." The last couple of years Field has started to play out of the area more, and this spring she'll be appearing at the Long Island Guitar Festival in Brookville, New York, a homecoming of sorts for her.

Field also has a new job. "I just started as director of the Seattle Classic Guitar Society [seattleguitar.com; it was founded in 1958], so that takes some time," she says. "We have a great board of directors and there are all sorts of things we do—we have an international [concert] series, free concerts at the museum, and education outreach to underserved communities. So there's plenty to do. Always." **CG**

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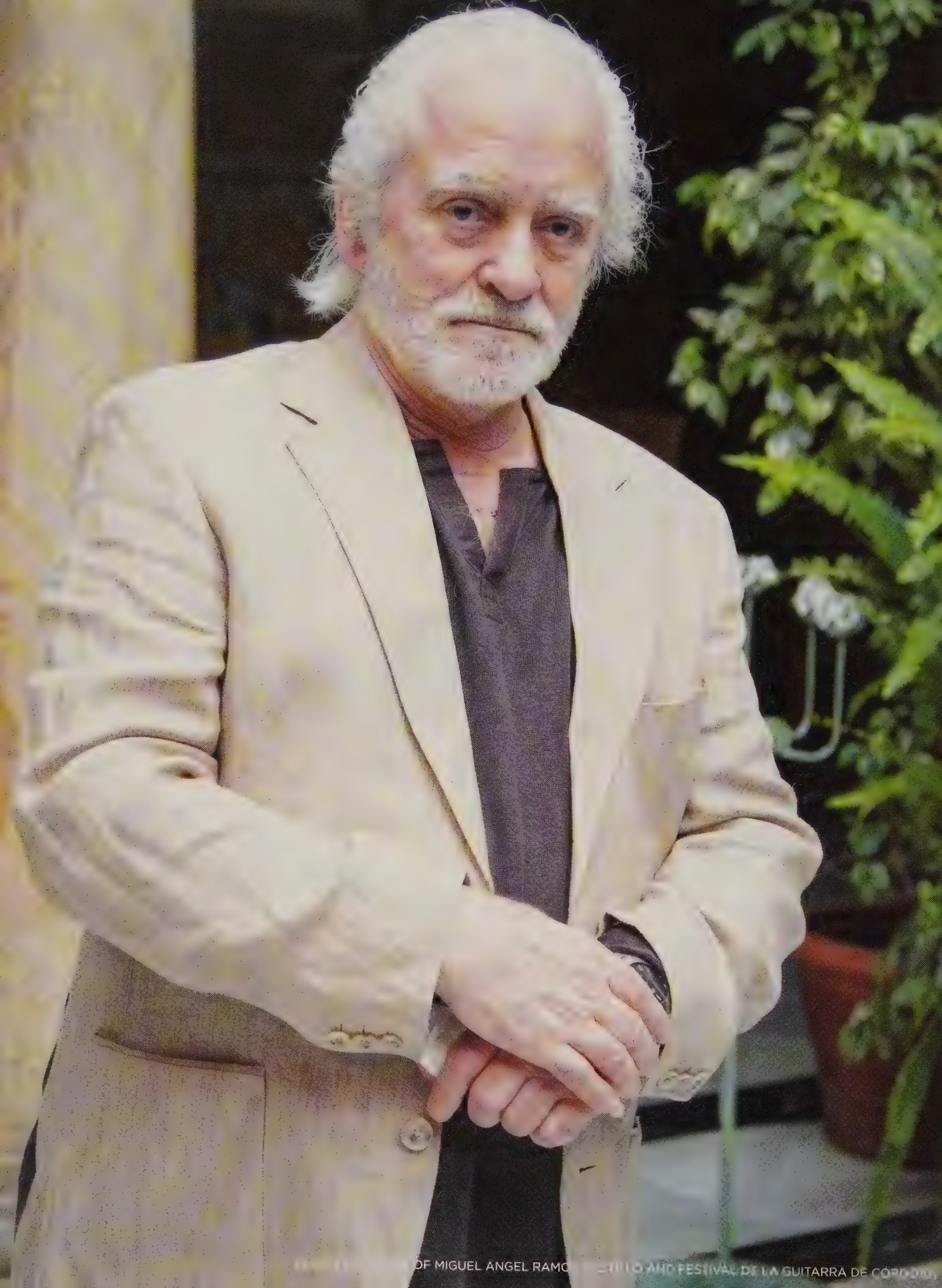

OF MIGUEL ANGEL RAMO[illegible]ITO AND FESTIVAL DE LA GUITARRA DE CÓRDOBA,

MODERN MASTERS OF FLAMENCO GUITAR
PART 1: MANOLO SANLÚCAR

by Jason Webster

No overview of the past 40 years of Spanish guitar would be complete without an appreciation of Manolo Sanlúcar, a contemporary of Paco de Lucía and co-instigator of the late-20th-century revolution in flamenco music. Like many leading figures in the art form, Manuel (Manolo) Muñoz was brought up in a flamenco family, born in the coastal town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda near Cádiz in 1943. His father was a guitarist and used to play with the legendary singer Pepe Marchena. The young Manolo was taught by his father from an early age, making his professional debut when he was only 13. In his early career he was supported by La Niña de los Peines, and for a long time was accompanist to singer La Paquera de Jerez (Francisca Méndez Garrido), a powerful thunderstorm of a *cantaora*, who facilitated an important turning point in Manolo's artistic development. It is commonly said that a flamenco guitarist needs to spend ten years accompanying dancers and another ten with singers before he should play solo. Manolo did his full apprenticeship, and after adopting the stage name 'Sanlúcar' after his home town, started playing concerts and recitals across Spain, where his unmistakeable talent, clean sound, and technical virtuosity made him quickly stand out as someone to watch.

It was the early 1970s and Spain was entering a fascinating transitional phase socially, politically, and culturally. The Franco regime was in its death throes and old taboos were being broken. Like many of his contemporaries, Sanlúcar started to experiment with his chosen art form, pushing flamenco in new directions, and extending its boundaries. As he later commented, "We realized that the guitar needed to be harmonically enriched; flamenco guitar [at the time] was harmonically impoverished."

Some of his explorations moved in the direction of "easy listening" and pop, heralded by the track "Caballo Negro" on his 1974 album *Sanlúcar*. With its use of drums, electric bass, and rhythm guitars, it was one of the milestones in the development of what later became known as *nuevo flamenco*. This was followed several years later by the hit tracks "Candela" (1980) and "Al Viento" (1982).

Apart from this lighter sound, however, Sanlúcar's greatest legacy perhaps lies in his marriage of flamenco with classical music, a format in which he shines both as a composer and virtuoso. This relationship began with his *Fantasía Para Guitarra y Orquesta* (1978), an ambitious four-movement piece with clear influences from Joaquín Rodrigo and the Spanish classical guitar tradition. This was followed in 1982 by his "flamenco opera" titled *Ven y Sígueme*, in which the noted singers El Lebrijano and Rocío Jurado performed, and his ballet, *Medea*, which has been taken around the world by the renowned Spanish National Ballet company.

As with all flamenco greats, however, Sanlúcar is engaged in the complex balancing act between innovating and remaining loyal to tradition, and while forays into the classical world have opened new possibilities, he has never forgotten his roots. The synthesis that this has produced in his music is best represented by *Tauromagia* (1988), one of his masterpieces and, in my opinion, the best flamenco guitar album ever recorded. The music charts the course of a bullfight, from the animal's life in the countryside, to the beginning of the fight, the pageantry and various sections of the *lidia* (the actual bullfight), and finally the torero's triumphal exit through the main gate. The *bulería* "Tercio de Vara" alone has a subtlety, balance, and complexity to it that makes the entire album worth listening to, while the final track, "Puerta del Príncipe" has become one of Sanlúcar's signature pieces and was featured in Carlos Saura's celebrated film, *Flamenco*.

After performing such great service to flamenco, scoring huge successes, and winning countless awards, in 2013 at the age of 70, Sanlúcar announced that he was retiring. He has not played in public since, but he leaves a rich legacy, not only in the new territory that he explored for the art form, but in the large number of younger players who have been inspired—directly and indirectly—to follow in his footsteps. If you don't know his work, go out and discover it—you have a treat waiting for you. **CG**

AT HOME IN TWO LANDS

Lily Afshar writes about her travels playing and teaching classical guitar in her native Iran

The extraordinary Iranian guitarist Lily Afshar emigrated to the United States two years before the 1979 revolution that deposed the Shah of Iran, and received the bulk of her guitar training at American schools—including Boston Conservatory, New England Conservatory, and Florida State University—as well as shorter programs in the US, Canada, and Europe. At FSU she became the first woman in the world to earn a doctorate in classical guitar performance. For more than two decades she has been a teacher at the University of Memphis, in Tennessee, while also maintaining a busy schedule as an in-demand performing guitarist and recording artist.

In the summertime, Tehran becomes a melting pot of Iranians returning from Canada, the US, and Europe—a cosmopolitan city where English, French, and Persian are all spoken. I started guitar when I was ten years old growing up in Tehran. I left Iran when I was 17, and after a 20-year absence, I have been going back for the last 14 summers to perform concerts and teach master classes.

A ten-hour flight from Memphis to Frankfurt, a five-hour layover, followed by a five-and-a-half hour flight brings me to the international airport in Tehran. In my suitcase I have packed guitar music, strings, and nail products for the guitar students in my master classes. These are things that are not found easily in Iran. Strings are sometimes fake and generally very expensive. Before the plane lands, all women onboard don their headscarves and tunics in compliance with the dress code of the country. I can expect to get over my jet lag in about a week.

Iran is the size of France and England put together. Tehran, the capital, is situated in the north-central part of the country, on the slope of the Alborz mountains, about 1,200 meters (4,000 feet) above sea level. On less polluted days, you can see its highest peak, Damavand, which towers 18,000 feet above the city. The population of Tehran is around 9 million; 16 million in the wider metropolitan area. It takes more than two hours to drive from one side of town to the other, depending on traffic, so punctuality is difficult.

Tehran is the headquarters of the annual Fajr International Music Festival, which includes a week of concerts and competitions. I have been invited twice to perform in the international category. That consisted of two concerts, one in Tehran and another in the southern port of Bushehr. If not invited by the government, musicians must get permission from the Ministry of Culture to perform any concerts, classical or otherwise. The ministry requires audio or video samples, a biography, and the proposed program. This has to be done at least six months in advance. It's easier to get permission for concerts in Tehran than in the provinces, which tend to be much more conservative. There are many Iranian pop concerts and occasional rap shows, the latter staged "underground" and without proper permission.

Because Tehran is so big, I play concerts in different locations, each for two consecutive nights; sometimes the hall insists on a third night. The largest and most famous venues are Vahdat Hall, Niavaran Cultural Center, Milad Tower, and on a smaller scale, Roudaki Hall. They are used for large orchestral and choir performances, theater productions, smaller chamber music, and solo recitals. Tickets were once sold at the door, but now all are sold online. Probably 75 percent of the audience is under 30, which means many attendees were born after the Islamic revolution of 1979 (which ousted the monarchy) and during the eight-year war with Iraq, which, combined, resulted in the death and injury of more than a million people.

Through all of that, the guitar was and still is the most popular instrument in Iran, and flamenco is as popular as classical. I remember as a child seeing Julian Byzantine perform to a packed house, and I know that Alirio Diaz performed the *Aranjuez* concerto with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra. Since the revolution, Nikita Koshkin, Juan Martin, and Paco Pena have performed in Iran, and other guitarists occasionally are invited by embassies to perform in Tehran. Guitar is finally taught at the University of Tehran (whereas before it was offered only at the Conservatory of Music), and there are now luthiers in various parts of the country. In addition, many guitars are imported from China and Spain.

Since the overthrow of the Shah during the revolution, traditional Persian music has flourished in Iran. More young people are studying Persian instruments such as the *tar* (a six-string forerunner of the guitar), the *seh-tar* (a four-string fretted instrument), *santur* (hammer dulcimer), *tanbur* (a long-necked fretted stringed instrument), and *kamancheh* (forerunner of the cello), as well as percussion instruments such as the *tombak* and *daf*. In my interviews with the press, I am often asked about my knowledge of Persian traditional music and musicians, and my plans for incorporating Persian music in my concerts.

In my programming for solo concerts, I have always made an effort to present new works among the old favorites. For instance, I gave the world premiere of "Nam," written for me by Carlo Domeniconi and recorded on my *1001 Nights* CD in Iran. Another time I performed the Iranian composer Reza Vali's pieces "Gozaar" and "Kord," as recorded on my CDs *Hemispheres* and *1001 Nights*. These works are especially interesting to Iranians, since they are based on traditional Persian scales, which use quarter tones. To play these works, I had 18 fretlets placed on the neck of my 1992 Humphrey Millennium.

The audience is both ecstatic and nostalgic when I perform my arrangements of Persian and Azerbaijani ballads, as recorded on my *A Jug of Wine and Thou* and *1001 Nights* CDs. I can almost hear them humming the words as I perform. Still, after performing these along with works by Bach, Rodrigo, Lauro, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and others, when it is time for the encore, they yell out for Albéniz's "Asturias," Tárrega's "Recuerdos de la Alhambra," and Domeniconi's "Koyunbaba," all favorites of guitar lovers worldwide. Another popular one is Fernando Bustamente's "Misionera"—my recording of this piece on *Hemispheres* was used for the celebration of Women's Day in Iran in 2013.

When I enter my master class in Tehran or the provinces, all students stand up at once and greet me, a sign of respect which is almost never seen in the West. Students range from ten to 40 years old. Just like

concerts, master classes are scheduled for two consecutive days running, from 9 AM–7 PM. Students have signed up to perform in solos, duos, trios, and quartets. Some first-timers audit the class, too. Most students come from Tehran, but some travel on buses, cars, and trains from provinces up to ten hours away. I have even had students from Kurdistan, Iraq, with whom I speak English in class.

There are lots of female guitarists, and playing levels are varied. I am overjoyed when I hear them play my "Five Popular Persian Ballads" or newer arrangements. Not surprisingly, however, Villa-Lobos' "Preludes" and "Etudes," Barrios' waltzes, "Asturias," "Koyunbaba," and pieces by Brouwer and Bach are among the most popular. Most students are technically proficient but weak in sight-reading and interpretation; they often simply imitate recordings, having not been taught phrasing and musicianship. Also, many students learn from Internet downloads, which are often loaded with mistakes. I spend a lot of time correcting music, and encouraging them to sing and think about phrasing and dynamics. Sometimes I also encourage them to write a story or poem for their piece—after all, Iranians are brought up reading such 12th- and 13th-century poets as Saadi and Hafez, both of whom teach valuable life lessons.

Last summer I was pleased to see students performing from my two method books, published in Iran in Persian, which address some of the technical and musical issues I have noticed there. The pieces come with my fingerings, and both volumes are accompanied by CD recordings of the music.

With one foot in the US and the other in Iran, I have built a bridge between the two countries. I hope that *Classical Guitar* readers now have a better perspective of the guitar scene in Iran and will join me and Iranian guitarists there in the not too distant future.

For more about Afshar's books and recordings, go to lilyafshar.com

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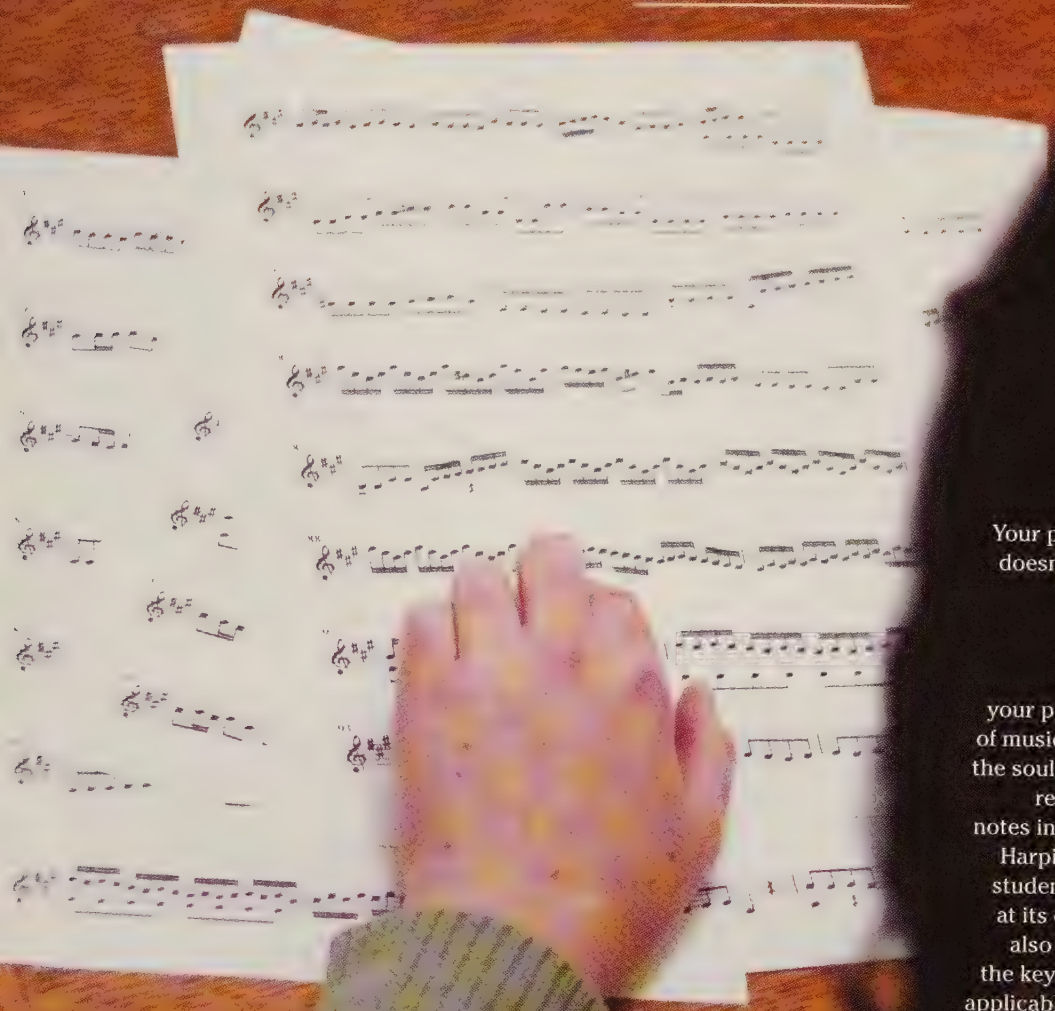


MORE THAN A FEELING

3 ways audiation can release your inner musicality

by Emily Wright

PROBLEM

Your playing, even when technically secure, doesn't sound musical, and you're not sure how to develop your own voice.

SOLUTION

Use the music in your head to infuse your performance with feeling. The purpose of music is to communicate, to share, to bare the soul. For many students, this undertaking resembles alchemy: how to turn leaden notes into the gold standard of musicianship. Harpist Joan Holland has guided countless students through this process, which holds at its core the importance of inner hearing, also known as audiating. Here, she shares the key elements of her approach, which are applicable to all instrumentalists, at any level.

Audiating is the practice of hearing inside your head. If you've ever scanned music and heard it playing in your mind, that's audiation.

Don't worry if it's not a skill currently in your repertoire; it can be developed by listening to music and following along with the score, by doing simple ear training exercises, by composing small tunes yourself and becoming familiar with intervals.

There's no wrong way to learn how to audiate, and it is key to manifesting your interpretative ideas

INVEST IN AUDIATING

Preeminent pianist and pedagogue Leon Fleischer advises musicians to first "read" the piece away from your instrument. Find a comfortable chair and a nice beverage, and calmly go over the piece mentally, with no preconceptions.

Next, choose a passage to delve into. Hear it in your inner ear; if it seems fuzzy, try to sing it. Still not there? Play it on the instrument a time or two and then return to hearing it internally.

Once the passage is clear internally, Holland suggests listening to it this way three times. The first time, simply listen to what is in your head, allowing for the necessary tempo, which is frequently very slow and calm. The second time, take stock of the intervallic relationships between notes. Intervals have a life of their own, with large leaps creating space and drama, scale-wise motion guiding the ear up or down, chromaticism instilling intensity and surprise. Eventually, you will want to take note of the harmony and voicing, chord progressions, and especially voice leading. If these terms sound overly academic or unfamiliar, brush up on your music theory. Although it has a reputation for being decidedly dry and unsexy, the theory of how music works is like a recipe for the magic of melody and harmony: There are devices that can reliably evoke emotional impact. Being able to identify them will help you better understand what a composer was trying to express.

MAKE MUSICAL CHOICES

When the notes are learned and you can reproduce what's on the page with some fluency, it's time to make the piece your own. Return to your inner hearing, once more calmly playing it in your mind as a blank canvas, without dynamics or affectation. This prepares you for the second pass: adding in the composer's indications and editor's additions, such as phrase markings, dynamics, and accents. Be mindful of truly playing what is on the page: It is at this phase that the music can get sucked right out of a piece by letting the energy of a note die by not sustaining it the full written length, or stopping vibrato (unintentionally) halfway through. If these things arise in your mental practice, they will translate to your physical repetitions, too.

Although it has a reputation for being decidedly dry and unsexy, the theory of how music works is like a recipe for the magic of melody and harmony.

The last stage of inner hearing involves imagining yourself playing the selection as a performer. What feelings are you experiencing and invoking as you play? If this question seems daunting, go back to the previous round of listening: What was missing? What were you controlling? If you still draw a blank, fear not! Listen to a recording and incorporate elements of emotion from it. This takes practice, and while the lore of being a born interpreter is pervasive in the musical world, many players learned it as they advanced.

As you imagine yourself playing, watch it unfold from the audience. Ask yourself if this is what you hope to present and evoke. Hear the quality of your sound, tonal fullness and color. Take it a step further and truly see yourself on the stage: your posture, balance, and presence.

Now play the passage on your instrument again.

APPLY PRACTICE TO PERFORMANCE

We've all heard performers talking about being in "the zone" but what does that really mean? For many, it is a frame of mind where the physical aspects of playing are simply following the lead of what their inner hearing is creating.

There is more to it than just playing along with a tune in your head, though. There is an aspect of showmanship that serves to help musicians inhabit the character of the piece, to be a true custodian of the music and its intent. You don't have to be sad to feel the sadness of a requiem. You don't have to be an extrovert to channel one. Everyone does a bit of this acting in his or her everyday life: Imagine the cheery character you put on when someone you need to impress asks how you are and you are anything but "well." This is a similar concept. Do whatever it takes to get yourself to a place where your insides match what you need the outer presentation to be: This may be a process of visualization that gets you into character or an outfit that inspires the mood of the performance.

Although it is not required for expressive performance, memorization helps a player focus on the physical and aural elements of playing. There is something about the visual stimulus of chasing notes down a page that limits the capacity to fully appreciate what is happening in the moment. One strategy to aid in both memorization and retaining the emotional focus of a piece is to break it down into sections and label them on the score. This can be anything from a storyline you feel is taking place throughout a movement to more abstract ideas or pictures you want to paint for the listener.

Inner hearing is critical to fostering a sense of intention and direction in a piece. It offers a set of specifics to guide your approach and bridge the gap between notes simply played and notes that speak to the listener in pictures, colors, and moods.

This article orginally appeared in the June 2015 issue of Strings *magazine.*

RESTORATION, REPAIRS, AND WRITING

Paris' Sinier de Ridder has taken its appreciation of historic guitars to a new level

Story and Photos by Kathleen Bergenin

Françoise de Ridder and Daniel Sinier

The Sinier de Ridder guitar repair workshop in Paris prides itself on hard, physical hand labor: There are saws, chisels, hammers, wood files and planes, vices, and various other tools of the luthier's trade everywhere. The couple from whom the firm takes its name, Daniel Sinier and Françoise de Ridder, have, for decades, made their living by using such tools to repair centuries-old musical instruments—guitars, lutes, citterns, and the like. Collectors and museums with newly acquired instruments that have suffered years of use and abuse have sought out the pair. And the two have brought those instruments back to life—including lutes in need of repaired fretboards and the only existing, still-playable Stradivarius guitar.

And yet, it may be as guitar historians, rather than craftsmen, that the Sinier de Ridder name has become well-known among those collectors. In particular, the couple's knowledge of how guitars were made and who made them in the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Their knowledge is so valuable because it is based not on visits to libraries to study what others have written, but on working directly with the instruments. It's one thing to read how René Lacote, Antonio de Torres, or some other noted luthier attached the neck of a guitar to its body; it's quite another to actually reset a neck made by that luthier. The couple study how the attachment was originally done, clean off old glues, repair broken areas, fill cavities, and then make sure the final, assembled piece conforms to the approach used by its original luthier.

Their efforts have not been easy. Françoise says, "We were amazed when we started our interest in historical guitars—the difficult restorations—to find nothing about makers: where, who, when, why…

"In the violin world," she continues, "an expert luthier can say where the instrument was made, at what time, in what town, by which particular maker, and in what period of his career. In the guitar world, they only can say, 'It is a guitar.'"

Early on, the couple was working virtually blind on the old fretted instruments they were asked to repair. If an owner brought them, for example, a 300-year-old guitar built by Jean-Baptiste Voboam, their first task was to learn all they could about Voboam's construction techniques. This often meant studying instruments by the same maker in private collections or museums, and they kept careful notes to aid them in the future. "The expertise is absolutely necessary to make serious restorations," Françoise says. "It prevents errors and helps to preserve things as well as possible in an original technical state, in an original historical condition." In addition, such information can prove invaluable to determine whether a particular instrument really was built by a specific luthier, instead of a copy or counterfeit.

Fortunately for those who have not had three decades working on more than 3,500 instruments, Sinier de Ridder has begun making its expertise accessible: The luthiers are publishing a series of books.

"Some years ago," Françoise says, "a colleague came to take measurements of a guitar made by French luthier Rene Lacote in order to build an exact copy. We were already specialists and always happy to talk about our work with other professionals. We had four Lacote guitars open on the worktable at the time. He asked, 'Why don't you publish photos and drawings? It could be a great help for us.'"

That was the impetus for getting involved in the publishing business. The plan was to create volumes based on the nationality of the luthiers whose instruments had come through their shop. The couple started with the French (since they are French); next will come a volume on Spanish luthiers, another on Italian, and then one on English, Austrian, and German guitars. For those who aren't French speakers, the text is also in English and Italian.

Their initial book—*La Guitare, Paris 1650–1950*—has 223 pages and features more than 400 photographs and drawings dealing with about 50 previously unpublished guitars. The second volume, dedicated to luthiers in the area of the renowned musical instrument manufacturing center of Mirecourt (in northeastern France), as well as other French provinces, features around 45 instruments made by more than 30 different luthiers. Not all of the instruments the couple have repaired are included in these volumes—only the ones they considered most significant.

Such specialized knowledge and expertise do not come cheap: The first two volumes were offered at €220 each (about $275 in today's exchange rate). From a quick perusal, one might conclude that *La Guitare* is a beautiful coffee table book—something to keep out for visitors to thumb through and admire. The 13½" x 9¾" tome is beautifully illustrated with large color photos of the instruments, as well as detailed drawings and other artwork. But closer examination reveals that it is a significant historical resource document. And the high-quality printing is not merely appealing to the eye, but also a means of having a precise record of the instruments and their unique construction features.

For the serious guitar collector, or representative of a museum or an auction house, the value of knowing the details of such instruments, which often sell for tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, is incalculable. And the fact that the first volume has sold out is an indication of the demand for such publications.

The luthiers named their newest book *La Guitare, Paris 1650–1950: Addendum* €120). The title is unfortunate, because it sounds like an afterthought, and, in a sense, that's what it is. They had planned to publish their Spanish volume next, but decided to delay it. Several new, rare, and important Paris guitars had come through their workshop since that first volume was published, and they wanted to include those in their monumental effort on French instruments. So the couple decided to release a supplement to the Paris book.

But don't assume from its title that the book is any less in-depth than the others. This new work focuses on 13 instruments made by six titans of Paris lutherie: René Lacote, Pierre Louvet, Louis David Pons, and the Voboam dynasty—Alexandre, Jean, and Jean-Baptiste. In addition to instruments of great beauty, such as the intri-

cately inlaid ivory, ebony, and tortoiseshell Voboam guitars, it also includes several noteworthy innovations. There is a discussion, for example, of the *tripodison*, a device for holding the guitar, invented by Dionisio Aguado. Of course, Aguado was a Spaniard, but his device merits inclusion in the Paris Addendum because a number of the guitars, especially those built by Lacote, had their backs modified with a reinforced hole, apparently for mounting Aguado's strange, and now extinct, invention.

In the mid-1800s, Spanish luthier Antonio de Torres brought together several innovations that resulted in today's classical guitar. But all the instruments prior to that, and the luthiers who made them, represent a virtual Dark Age, unknown and uncared about. As the luthiers put it in their second book, "At the start of the 21st century, everything that concerns the guitar before the phenomenon of Torres has been completely forgotten, both by musicologists and by historians, as well as by the guitar players themselves.

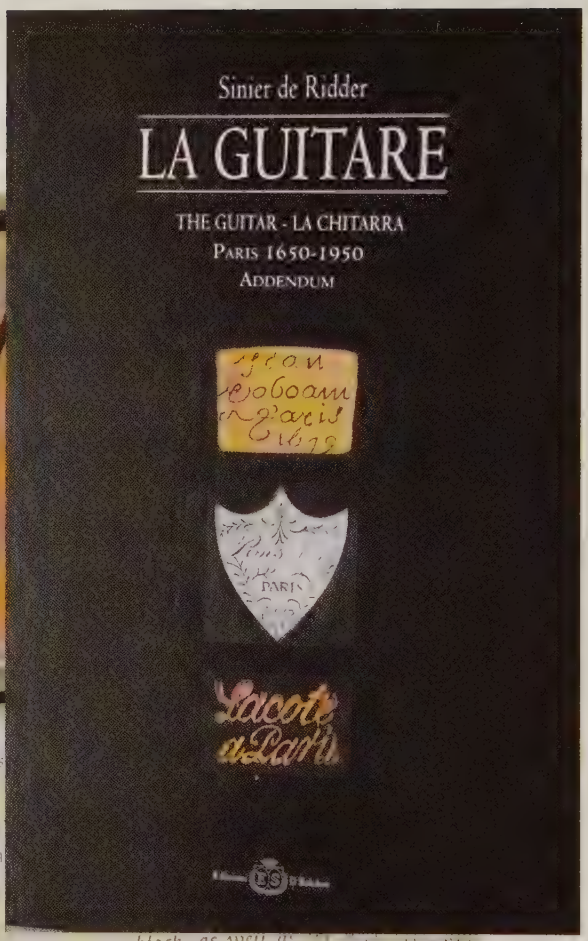
"Today's professional musicians," they continue, "unconcernedly play repertoires of past centuries on instruments of modern dimension and form, made by excellent guitar makers, highly talented, undoubtedly competent, but who follow construction principles that did not exist when these pieces of music were written."

"It has been a goal of our professional life," Françoise elaborates, "to show what the guitar was before its current state—before Torres, the 'Stradivari' of guitars—and why and how it became one of the most important instruments in all cultures all around the world. How it was, in the same period, both a popular instrument made with cheap woods, by poor workers, as well as a sophisticated instrument made by artists for other artists and kings, with luxurious materials."

Their books and their restorations show that the pre-Torres instruments were not products of some Dark Age, but rather a remarkable Renaissance.

The new volume, the 83-page Addendum, *goes for €120, about $150. It is available at sinier-de-ridder.com*

Cover and interior page from *Addendum*



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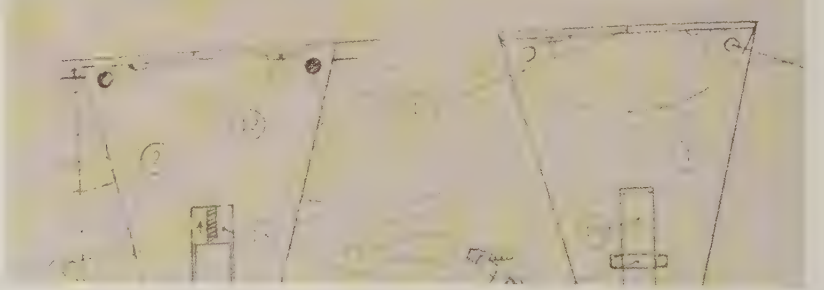

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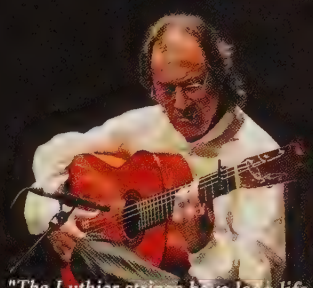

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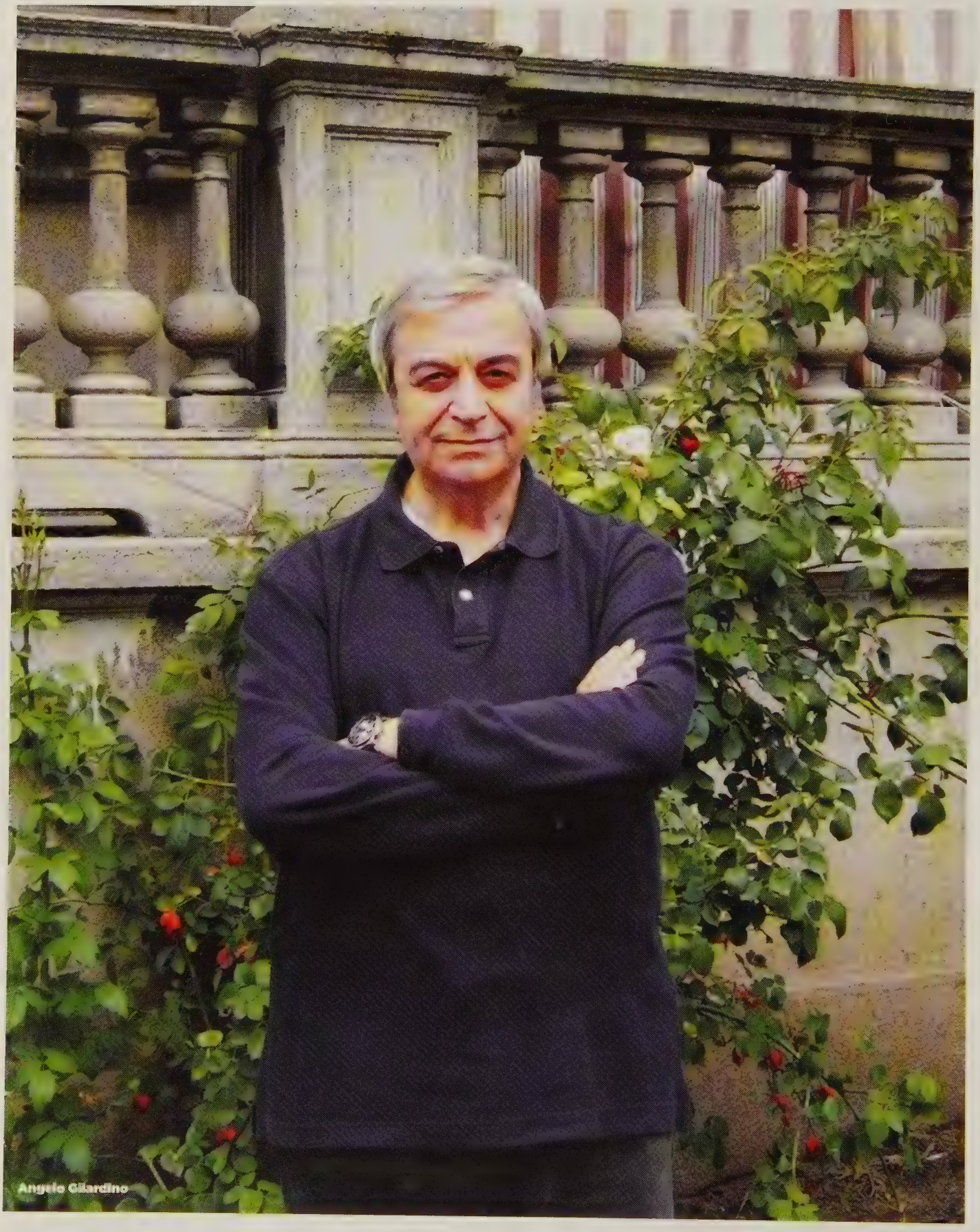
Angelo Gilardino

COMPOSER GUITARIST TEACHER MUSICOLOGIST

ANGELO GILARDINO HAS WORN MANY HATS IN AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER SPANNING MORE THAN FIVE DECADES

BY GIACOMO FIORE

Angelo Gilardino is a singular figure in recent guitar history. A former concert artist and the dedicatee of dozens of new works, the Italian maestro has left his imprint on the repertoire in many ways. As an editor, he has curated a contemporary guitar series for Bérben Editions since 1967. More recently he became the artistic director of the Andrés Segovia Foundation, for which he published 32 manuscripts from Segovia's archives, including works long-considered lost, and alternative editions of staples from the repertoire. In addition to mentoring conservatory and private pupils, he has also contributed to guitar pedagogy through the publication of several volumes on the instrument's history and technique, as well as composition manuals.

Composition itself occupies a central role in his career: Gilardino has been writing for the guitar since 1964, and his decision to retire from the concert stage in 1981 reflected a desire to dedicate himself to other creative endeavors more fully. A recent retrospective by Sardinian guitarist Cristiano Porqueddu collects Gilardino's oeuvre for solo guitar on 14 discs, spanning 50 years—a lifetime—and offering a fascinating vantage point into the composer's longtime relationship with the guitar. From the early pieces of the 1960s, denoted by dark, nocturnal atmospheres, to his massive collection of concert etudes of the early 1980s (the 60 *Studi di Virtuosità e di Trascendenza*), to the wide variety of small- and large-scale pieces composed more recently, Gilardino's inspiration takes many guises. Most of his works bear dedications to other musicians, literary figures, painters, or locales. His musical language is mercurial, often venturing into great harmonic and contrapuntal complexity, though never losing track of the sensuous element of the sound, the beautiful mystery of the guitar's resonances, and the instrument's penchant for lyricism. I took this opportunity to ask the composer some questions about the instrument, the repertoire, and what may lie ahead.

CLASSICAL GUITAR: What are five "essential" pieces from the past century, according to Angelo Gilardino?

ANGELO GILARDINO: Five? I should start with 100, and would end up forgetting some. Here is how I would look at it: What place does a given composer's works for guitar occupy within the overall oeuvre of the author? If we're talking about some occasional small pieces, composed to make some guitarist happy, then I don't think we can consider them "essential."

If, on the other hand, they represent a noteworthy example within their work, then they can be defined as such. For example, Manuel Maria Ponce wrote three concertos: one for violin, one for piano, and one for guitar. The latter, *Concerto del Sur*, is the best of the three from a strictly musical standpoint, notwithstanding the fact that it was written for guitar; therefore it is essential. [Francis] Poulenc's "Sarabande" is a nice piece, but it is also nothing more than the re-writing of an idea for guitar that he had already used for other pieces; it is just a little page, and is not essential. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's most beautiful "Rondo" was written for guitar, so much so that the composer himself considered it a model of formal perfection; it is essential. [Darius] Milhaud's "Segoviana" is not. We could continue with a hundred more examples.

CG: You have mentioned that your decision to become a composer was motivated in part by the urge to contribute to the guitar repertoire—something that you also achieved through your activities as an editor and historian. Looking back over the past 50 years, how do you judge the state of the instrument in the 21st century?

GILARDINO: The state of an instrument depends on the richness of its repertoire, both in terms of quality and quantity. The guitar has a good repertoire, especially from the 20th century, and thus we should not fear for its future, nor for its reputation. The main problem for the guitar lies in the way its repertoire is presented by many guitarists in their concerts and recordings. It seems like many are incapable of differentiating the works of the masters from those of amateurs posing as composers. This issue affects the reputation of the instrument.

'I find guitarist-composer to be a dangerous label, because it is often given to performers who write down on paper mere sequences of sonic gestures, which has nothing in common with actual composition.'
ANGELO GILARDINO

CG: Do you consider yourself a composer-guitarist or a guitarist-composer?

GILARDINO: I am a former guitarist who studied composition when he was younger and at a certain point in his career decided to retire from the concert stage in order to dedicate himself solely to composing. I find guitarist-composer to be a dangerous label, because it is often given to performers who write down on paper mere sequences of sonic gestures, which has nothing in common with actual composition. I don't really want to be considered one of them, simply because I am not.

CG: Are there some contemporary composers whose writing for guitar excites you?

GILARDINO: I'd rather not name names. I think the better composers are those who have studied composition, who can craft pieces with carefully designed forms, and who can rely on the instrument's idiomatic resources while avoiding those "effects without cause" that render too many pieces ridiculous. You see, to evaluate the level of an author's musical thinking, all you need is to take a look at a single page. You can tell at first sight whether the writer was a master or a wannabe. Rather than come up with a list of recommended compositions, I would rather note that, in the guitar world, there is a great mixture. In a "serious" recital, it is common to hear Bach and Scarlatti, followed by a musical ditty written by the local grocer—each piece offered with the highest degree of seriousness.

CG: The *60 Studi di Virtuosità e di Trascendenza* (*Virtuosity and Transcendence Etudes*) make up a substantial portion of your output. The word "Transcendence" evokes several connotations, from transcending the limits of the instrument, to spiritual implications, as well as the example of Franz Liszt, who wrote his *Transcendental Etudes*. What does it mean to you?

GILARDINO: Transcending virtuosity means to annihilate the latter into a purely musical gesture, in which no trace of *bravura* remains. If the audience hears a guitarist and thinks "he is good," it means he is not good enough. The true virtuoso transmits the music to the audience perfectly and transparently, rather than using the music to display his skill.

CG: You have mentioned in your writings that you do not use the guitar while composing, but rather resort to a "virtual" guitar inside your mind. However, in private contexts, do you still play? If so, what?

GILARDINO: I play scales for half an hour a day to keep my guitars alive—I don't like to leave them silent—and sometimes I use the guitar to read small details in the repertoire that are not clear simply from sight-reading the music. I don't really care that my technique evaporated, and that performers who sometimes come by for a lesson of interpretation are infinitely "better" than I ever was. They also don't care. They are not coming to hear some examples, but to better understand the details of the pieces they are working on. This is not the Old West, where it really mattered how fast you could draw and fire your Colt revolver.

CG: What guitars do you currently have?

GILARDINO: I have a modest collection of Italian guitars built by the most prominent luthiers born before 1920. I have the 1936 Luigi Mozzani that Segovia used on his US tour of 1937, and other similar specimens. Their sound is very different from that of Spanish guitars, and I like it very much. It's my ideal sound. I prefer it to that of Torres and Manuel Ramirez alike. Incidentally, my favorite Spanish luthier from the same period was Enrique Sanfeliu, a builder of the Catalonian school who was perhaps the closest in style to the Italians.

CG: One of your recent projects, *Il legno che canta* ("Wood that Sings"), as a matter of fact, explores the history of Italian luthiers from the first part of the 20th century. I don't think this book is available in English—could you introduce it to the readers, perhaps explaining what drew you to this research?

GILARDINO: Until the 1930s, Italian guitar-building was still following the 19th-century indigenous tradition. From that point on, leading Italian luthiers adopted Torres' model, but not just by copying it. They adapted to it, while at the same time preserving certain building and timbral characteristics that were very different from those of their Spanish colleagues. I wrote the book to clarify the contributions of the Italian masters to the history of lutherie in the first half of the 20th century. They are ignored abroad, and in Italy their work is not given proper consideration. I tried to fill that void, explaining what is the nature of the Italian sound.

CG All the compositions in your catalog feature the guitar. Did you ever hear the call, or feel the urge, to compose something abstracted from the instrument?

GILARDINO: I have written 17 concertos for guitar and orchestra, and a dozen chamber pieces with a *concertante* guitar part, because I thought I could do something unique and original. Had I written an opera, or pieces for orchestra, I would likely have followed the steps of some great 20th-century composer, as an epigone [an inferior follower].

I think I have spent my energies in the right direction, where the fruits of my research were more needed, and more appreciated. The world of music is not missing a Gilardino symphony, but my concertos for guitar are like those of no other composer. **CG**

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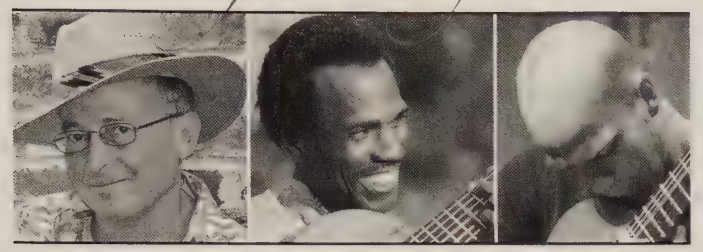

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AN INTERVIEW WITH IGNACIO RODES

BY THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

From the 1960s to the early 1990s, the University of Alicante in Spain was a hub of international classical guitar activity, as students traveled from all over the world to study with José Tomás in Alicante and José Luis González in nearby Alcoy. Now, a new program, the Master in Classical Guitar Interpretation, established in 2013, offers a unique and intense approach to a performance degree.

I recently revisited my classical guitar alma mater to speak with guitarist Ignacio Rodes, the new program's academic director and professor of guitar at the Conservatorio Superior de Música Óscar Esplá in Alicante. He spoke about the history of classical guitar in the region as well as his own experiences both as a student of the renowned Tomás and as a concert performer.

CLASSICAL GUITAR: Alicante has a long tradition of excellent guitar teaching, and you were lucky enough to start with one of its finest, José Tomás. Did he follow any particular teaching method in your early years?

IGNACIO RODES: Yes, and I still have the document with the program of studies he followed when he started teaching at the conservatory. That was around 1965 and I am quite sure it was the most coherent and advanced at that time. In fact, it could still be used in present times. It was based in the best tradition of the Spanish guitar, with a particular focus on developing the technique through the methods by Sor, Aguado, and Giuliani, and included studies by modern composers such as Stephen Dodgson and Leo Brouwer. José Tomás was a great teacher and a very intelligent musician.

CG: And he studied with so many fine Spanish guitarists—not only with Andrés Segovia, but also with Emilio Pujol. Did he tell you any stories of his lessons with these masters?

RODES: Before studying with Pujol and Segovia, José Tomás also received lessons from Regino Sáinz de la Maza, but he always considered that the most important teacher for him had been Andrés Segovia. Pepe [José Tomás] liked to illustrate his classes with anecdotes and funny stories, and I remember some of them very well—for instance, those related to some opinions by Segovia about other guitarists. I guess he was a very incisive critic.

José Tomás had a very fine sense of humor, although sometimes there were students in courses that did not understand it, or they thought that he was making fun of them. For instance, if somebody was playing a work that did not have a certain musical level or it was a bad transcription, Pepe could get very angry, adopting a disdainful attitude towards the composer or

Ignacio Rodes

the arranger. At other times, he might make a joke about it—I remember once, during a course in Tenerife, after a student played a piece, Pepe kneeled down and, looking up to the ceiling of the classroom, he started a kind of prayer, saying: "Please, my God, free us of works like the one we have just heard ... If you do so, I will do whatever you want." It was really funny the way he [said] it, but I am not sure if the student who had just played was happy with that situation.

CG: José Tomás was a very good arranger himself. His ideas on the performance of Bach, for example, were much admired and coveted by his students. Did he publish any of his arrangements of pieces, or any technical studies?

RODES: It is a pity that most of his work as a transcriber has still not been published. He was quite generous with his work and gave it to his students. In fact, many guitarists have a copy of a copy of a copy of different transcriptions he made. He was never really concerned about publishing them. All his transcriptions are excellent and I daresay that it would be difficult to improve on them. His thoughts on early music and Bach's music were very consistent, as were his general concepts on music. Some months ago, [lutenist] Paul O'Dette told me that when he played the guitar, he wrote to José Tomás asking for his transcription of a Bach suite and, without even knowing Paul, he sent it. Paul still remembers that he was very impressed by that wonderful transcription he received.

CG: Tomás used to play Bach on an eight-string guitar, which he had requested Ramírez make for him. Could you speak a little about Tomás and the eight-string guitar?

RODES: José Tomás was always very interested in early music and that led him towards the eight-string guitar. He did many transcriptions not only of music by Bach, but also by other composers such as Weiss and quite a number of Renaissance lutenists and vihuela players. Besides this, he completed transcriptions of modern music for which the eight-string guitar could offer more possibilities. Paul Galbraith told me that, in a way, he thinks that José Tomás was a precursor of his Brahms guitar. But for reasons that I am not informed enough to explain, in around 1980, José Tomás returned to the six-string guitar.

In my case, I never had the tendency or curiosity to play any guitar other than the six-string classical guitar.

CG: What inspired you to study the guitar and how old were you when you had your first lessons?

RODES: My mother studied piano in her youth and loved classical music very much. She transmitted that passion to me, and when I was just eight years old, I already knew the names of Andrés Segovia and Narciso Yepes. At the age of nine I received my first guitar lessons, but it was not until I was 15 that José Tomás started teaching me, and that was the beginning of a very intense musical relationship with him which also led to a close friendship.

CG: Do you remember the first classical concerts you went to?

RODES: Yes, and I still have the programs! When I was nine years old my mother took me to a piano concert by Arthur Rubinstein. I was very impressed and wrote comments on which pieces I liked the most. The first guitar recital I attended was one by Regino Sáinz de la Maza, also when I was nine.

CG: When was the first time you played in public?

RODES: The first time I appeared onstage was as a part of a guitar trio when I was 14. A year later, I was already studying with José Tomás and I gave a short recital in the concert hall of the conservatory. I remember that I played some works by Fernando Sor and Agustín Barrios. Many years later, José Tomás told me that he had liked my playing so much that he spoke to my father to tell him that I could potentially be a professional guitarist.

CG: Did you hear Tomás give recitals? How would you describe his playing, his approach, and his sound?

RODES: I heard him playing in concert many times. His playing was extremely serious in the best sense of the word, with a great commitment to music that you could see in the programs he presented and in the clarity of his performances. His sound was very impressive, very powerful, rounded, and clean.

CG: Alicante and its neighboring regions are rich with guitar history. Were you aware of this as you were growing up?

RODES: When I was very young I was fortunate to meet and listen to guitar students from all over the world in my birthplace. Before I had the opportunity to study with José Tomás, I knew that he was a very well-known guitarist and I also knew that there was another great guitarist and teacher, José Luis González, a few kilometers away. The guitar atmosphere in Alicante at that time was incredible and, as you say, it was the fruit of a very long tradition of plucked instruments in the Mediterranean area. But to be honest, I only realized that it was something special and unique much later.

CG: I imagine that you also had access to some very good Spanish guitars? What was the first hand-made you played?

RODES: When I was 13 years old my mother bought me a Ramírez that I still have. I remember that it was her last present to me, because she died some months later. I played with this guitar until I was 19, when I won the Ramírez competitionand got another Ramírez that was chosen by José Tomás. I have been playing Romanillos guitars since 1986.

WASSILY SABA: After you completed your studies at the Conservatorium in Alicante, you spent time living and working abroad. What started you off on this adventure?

RODES: I was very interested in early music and applied for a grant to the British Council to study in London. I was very lucky to be awarded such a wonderful scholarship, as I was the first Spanish music student to obtain it. I lived in London from 1983 to 1986 and shared an apartment with David Russell, who was a total help and inspiration. Besides having David so near and studying with him, I received lessons from Nigel North, Christopher Wilson, and Jakob Lindberg. Although I had studied early music and Bach's music with José Tomás, this new period was extremely important for me.

CG: What led you to New York?

RODES: At a certain point, around 1994, I had some concert possibilities in the United States,—even more than in Europe—so I decided to move. It was a great period, full of new experiences, and it gave me the possibility of enjoying some years in a wonderful city.

CG: Now you are back in Alicante, welcoming a new generation of classical guitarists, who are again making the pilgrimage to Alicante to perfect their playing through the Master in Classical Guitar Performance.

RODES: I think that the Master in Classical Guitar Performance is unique in offering not only the best guitar teachers, but also for giving the opportunity exclusively to the 14 students selected to live for a six-month period in a historic building, called San Roque. Whenever I go there and visit the students in their residence, I always think that it is a pity I could not enjoy that experience when I was young! And this is something that is repeated by most of the teachers and guitarists that get to know San Roque and share the great atmosphere that the students create there. It is situated in the old part of the city and you can enjoy a wonderful view of Alicante and the Mediterranean Sea from the big terrace on top of the building.

The IV Master in Classical Guitar Performance of the University of Alicante begins in January 2016, with David Russell, Stefano Grondona, Ignacio Rodes, Fabio Zanon, Sérgio and Odair Assad, Manuel Barrueco, Paul O'Dette, the neuroscientist Víctor Candia, and conductor José de Eusebio. master-guitarra-alicante.com

Alicante Masters students from the Class of 2015, on the terrace of San Roque

THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA PHOTO

IN THE HANDS OF ANGEL

55 YEARS AFTER THE DEBUT OF LOS ROMEROS, ANGEL ROMERO REMAINS A VITAL FORCE IN CLASSICAL MUSIC

BY MARK SMALL

FELIX SALAZAR PHOTO

"I just turned 69 and I still feel like I'm 18 years old," Angel Romero says, standing in the dining room of his home in the hills outside of San Diego, California. He flexes a bicep and tells me to squeeze his arm through the sleeve of his Tommy Bahama sweatshirt. "I'm exactly the same physically as I was back then. I can outrun anybody!" he says with characteristic bravura.

Romero may or may not be referring literally to a footrace, but for decades his musical virtuosity has placed him at the head of the pack among guitarists (although he credits his brother Pepe with running neck-and-neck with him). It's not just the speed and accuracy of Angel's muscular technique, but when added to the fiery and

Opposite page: Angel in his sixties

Left: Angel in his teens

highly emotive components of his playing, it's hard to mistake his recordings for those of any other guitarist. Our freewheeling conversation runs from technique to guitar makers, stage fright, repertoire, and more, and is punctuated frequently by Romero's robust laugh. Age notwithstanding, the maestro is at the top of his form, enjoying a full schedule of appearances as a recitalist, orchestral soloist, conductor, and family man with wife Nefi and their 14-year-old daughter Bella.

An old photograph on a wall in his home shows the Romero family—his parents and three brothers—outdoors in Santa Barbara, California, in the summer of 1957, shortly after they arrived from Spain. Angel is ten, dressed in shorts, clutching a fishing pole. He explains how the family got to the United States. "An American, Farrington Stoddard, who was a Merchant Marine, visited Malaga [Spain] with his wife, Evelyn," Angel says. "They met my father and [brother] Celin and fell in love with Spanish culture. Celin started giving him guitar lessons." The Stoddards sponsored the Romeros to come to America, enabling them to escape from Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's fascism. A few years later, they formed their much-celebrated guitar quartet.

When the ensemble began performing publicly in 1960 as Los Romeros Guitar Quartet, Angel was just 14, playing alongside his father Celedonio, and older brothers Pepe and Celin. He toured the world with the group for 30 years before turning his attention to a solo career. The quartet continues to perform with Pepe and Celin in the lineup, along with Celin's son Celino replacing the late family patriarch Celedonio, and Angel's son Lito replacing his dad. Angel blames external forces—record labels and management—with precipitating his departure from the group.

"I am on the EMI label and Pepe is with Phillips and we have different management," Angel says. "They started causing problems, each trying to protect their artists. Who is Pepe's biggest rival? Me. Who is my biggest rival? Pepe. But we couldn't be closer. We talk on the phone every night.

"There are pieces that I have recorded that he won't touch," Angel continues. "And the *Concierto Para Una Fiesta* that [Joaquín] Rodrigo wrote for him is a piece I won't play because I'm scared! I put on his recording and think, 'His version is so great, what am I going to do with this?'"

HOLLYWOOD NETWORK

Living in Southern California presented unforeseen advantages for Angel Romero by fostering friendships with many of Hollywood's "in crowd." The week before we met for our interview, he played at an event with the Beach Boys. "Carl Wilson—God rest his soul—and I were buddies in high school," Romero says.

"We ate lunch together and would go bowling after school. Once he was in New York and heard me playing some Scarlatti. He said, 'That would sound great in a song!'" And thus, according to Romero, Scarlatti became the inspiration for the opening guitar figure in "Sloop John B," a hit from the Beach Boys' 1966 album *Pet Sounds*. "I am like an honorary Beach Boy," Romero says. "I'm very good friends with Bruce Johnston, Mike Love, and the rest of them. I played 'Sloop John B' with them at a charity event last week."

Hollywood connections also led to soundtrack work and the composition of multiple concertos. An enduring friendship with actor Ricardo Montalbán began in 1979 when Montalbán was spokesman for a Chrysler car commercial and Romero was featured in the underscore playing the second movement of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*.

Through Montalbán, Romero met Robert Redford and ultimately performed on Dave Grusin's soundtrack for Redford's 1988 film *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Romero was later featured on movie scores by Bill Conti, and made a cameo appearance as a parole board member in Taylor Hackford's *Blood In, Blood Out* (1993) in addition to playing on the score.

It was through Montalbán that Romero also met film composer Lalo Schifrin. "He called me a few days later to say that he wanted to write a concerto for me," Romero says. "After it was finished, I premiered it and recorded it with the London Philharmonic [in 1991]. I lost contact with him for a while, but he resurfaced recently. He called and said that he felt inspired to write me a second concerto. I thought it was a great idea. He titled it *Concierto de la Amistad* (*Concerto to the Friendship*). It's a fantastic work. He finished it in just two months."

Romero says a third Schifrin guitar concerto is also in the works: "This one will be for guitar and choir with four vocal soloists," he says. "The choir will make sound effects imitating percussion and other things."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANGEL ROMERO

'I always conduct from memory. I don't like to read a score in a performance. That's like an actor reading cue cards.'

ANGEL ROMERO

PHILHARMONIC AMBASSADOR

Playing orchestral works has long been an important component of Romero's career. He gave the American West Coast premiere of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* in 1966 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, led by the late Spanish conductor Rafael Brübeck de Burgos. The anniversary of that event was commemorated in May 2015 when Gustavo Dudamel conducted the same piece with the same orchestra. The result was four sold-out concerts at LA's famed Walt Disney Concert Hall. The *Aranjuez* has become Romero's signature piece, and it's one of many factors that endeared him to its composer Joaquín Rodrigo.

"I *own* that concerto," Romero quips. "I can't remember if it was Julian Bream or John Williams who told me that other guitarists should get a visa from me to play it," he says with a belly laugh.

Romero considers himself the prime ambassador for bringing the guitar to the philharmonic audience—he would be to the guitar what Lang Lang is to the piano and Itzhak Perlman is to the violin. "I am putting the guitar on that platform," Romero says. "There is an echelon in the symphonic world where the guitar has not been accepted. Other colleagues have played some concerts with big orchestras, but not to the extent that I have. I've played with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Symphony, the Chicago Symphony, and with Arthur Fiedler. I've been with everybody. This is my contribution to the guitar."

One quality that places Romero among the top classical soloists in the symphonic world is his super-charged technique. When asked how he developed it, his response is classic. "I don't know where the hell it came from!" he says, grinning. "It's really unusual." He points to an RCA recording of Vivaldi concertos he did with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Orchestra. "[It] has flute and violin concertos—things that were diabolical to play," he says. "I hear them now and wonder, how did I do that?"

Among Romero's many recordings of works demanding incendiary scale and arpeggio passages, his rendition of Bach's "Chaconne" is a standout. "On *Angel Romero Plays Bach*, when I got to the scales, I wasn't thinking about them like a guitarist," he says. "I play them fast, like a violinist would. That requires an extra gear that many guitarists do not have."

At a young age, Romero developed incredible speed and coordination between the hands. But possessing seemingly limitless technique can be a double-edged sword. "It makes composers like Lalo feel that they have free reign to make my life miserable!" Romero jokes. "Lalo's second concerto is very virtuosic. I looked at it and thought, 'Does he like me or hate me?'"

TECHNICAL INSIGHTS

Pulling back the curtain on Romero's technique a bit, he says, "There is a formula. The fingers have to strike the string at *exactly* the same angle all of the time. I don't allow them to drift. I always plant with the fingers of the right hand. The left hand has to be in a completely natural position. My theory is not to do any body movement that is not natural. It's like the way anyone—guitarist or not—would grab a glass to drink out of it. There is a natural way that our hands function. We were conceived to make natural movements in all that we do—forget that you are playing the guitar. My fingers are not [unusually] fast, everybody's fingers are fast. In master classes, I tell everyone to imagine seeing someone holding a glass and tapping their fingers on it. They are tapping as fast as anyone who plays fast *picados*. It's all natural."

Asked about the rising generation of guitarists, Romero is enthusiastic—with one reservation. "I am seeing fantastic players," he says, "but there is one thing I don't like about the way some people are teaching them. I don't understand why they are being taught to hold the guitar like a cello, with the neck straight up. Forget it. To me, this position makes the left hand work against gravity to move down the neck and then going up. It feels different to raise your hand than to drop it. So if you have to use a completely different force to lift up the hand and an opposite force to bring it down, you are confusing your mind. Both hands are working against gravity and that makes you tense.

"You want *one* movement for going up and down," Romero continues. "That's the way Segovia, my father, Bream, Williams, [Manuel] Barrueco, my brother Pepe, and I do it. If I saw someone getting results [with that approach] and playing the *Aranjuez* better than I do, then I'd ask them to show me how I should hold the guitar. You shouldn't try to reinvent the wheel unless you've found a way to play better."

WHAT, ME WORRY?

It follows that, with formidable technique and much confidence, Romero doesn't experience stage fright. "When I'm going to play with the New York or LA Philharmonic, five days before I'll be a little nervous," he says. "But when I'm in the dressing room and there's ten minutes before I go on, I am so tranquil. When they open up the door and I walk through the violin section, it's like I'm going to Disneyland. I'm ready, and to play is nothing."

In 1992 Romero played the *Aranjuez* with Raphael Frübeck de Burgos before the United Nations General Assembly. The performance was telecast to 81 countries. Shortly afterward, Romero got a call from Manuel Barrueco. "He said that during the humongous scales in triplets at the end of the first movement, I looked into the camera and laughed," Romero remembers. "He said, 'It was like you were laughing at all of us [guitarists].'

"That was the furthest thing from my mind!" Romero continues. "I was laughing because I looked at my hand and it was just doing it. I wink twice and the scale is over. [That movement has] two scales that are very difficult for all guitarists. After the first one, I am just waiting for the second one. It's my love for the guitar and the music. I am not afraid of the guitar; it's my friend."

Romero is comfortable on either end of the baton. He showed an interest in conducting as a four-year-old in Spain when his mother took him to outdoor concerts to see Ataúlfo Argenta conduct the Spanish National Orchestra. It became a focal point after his performances of the *Aranjuez* with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. "I used to observe his baton tech-

nique from the wings," Romero recalls. "Catching me, Ormandy said, 'I should charge you for lessons!'" What started as a joke turned into unofficial mentoring sessions with the great conductor.

Romero has since led numerous orchestras worldwide, including the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, the Royal Philharmonic, the Berlin Symphoniker, the Beijing Philharmonic, the Shanghai Symphony, the Bogotá Philharmonic, the Chicago Sinfonietta, the Orquesta de Baja California, the San Diego Symphony, and others. He has a fondness for the Germanic repertoire, especially the symphonies of Beethoven. The night after our interview, he conducted a concert featuring music by British composers Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams, plus Joaquín Turina's trademark string orchestra work, *La Oracíon del Torreo* (*The Bullfighter's Prayer*). "I always conduct from memory," Romero says. "I don't like to read a score in a performance. That's like an actor reading cue cards."

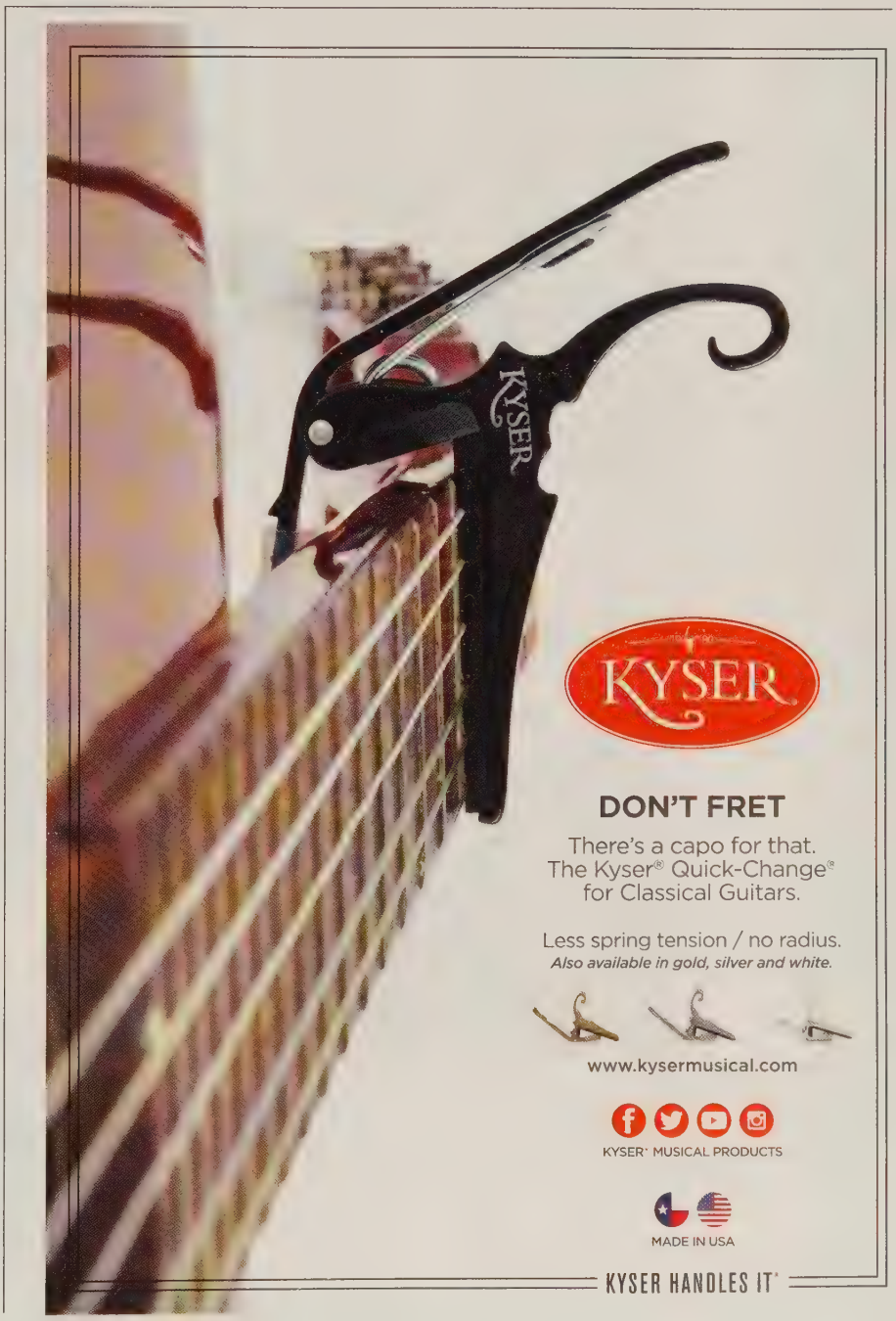
THE TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

When it comes to Romero's preferences for guitar makers, he says, "I admire Stephen Connor personally and professionally. He created an Angel Romero model and I took part in the design and choosing of the wood." Connor made a limited run of just ten of these very expensive guitars; each went to wealthy buyers. "The sound of these guitars is outrageous," Romero says. He played that model for years, but doesn't tour with it any more, wanting to preserve it. Connor also built another guitar for Angel and named it "Mini Me"—its label bears a small picture of Angel. "I play that one a lot and it looks like it's been through a war," Angel says, "but it sounds great." He also loves a guitar made to his specifications for him by his nephew, Pepe Romero Jr. Among its features is a sound port like those in Connor's guitars.

"Every once in a while I will play guitars by other makers," Angel says. "A maker named Erez Perelman from Israel made a fantastic instrument for me, and Thomas Malapanis, who is Greek and lives in Alaska, also built me a great guitar." Angel is not a purist when it comes to traditional bracing versus alternative guitar-top construction. "I am open to playing anything that sounds great," he says. "It's like asking if you like saffron in your rice. Just put it in front of me, I'll taste it. If I love [the guitar's sound], I don't care how it's made."

While he does not have a guitar collection as extensive as Pepe's, among Angel's instruments is a 19th-century guitar built by Manuel Martinez de Málaga that belonged to Fernando Sor. "In an old article I read," Angel tells me, "Sor was asked what his favorite guitar was. He said it was the Manuel Martinez rather than his Lacote."

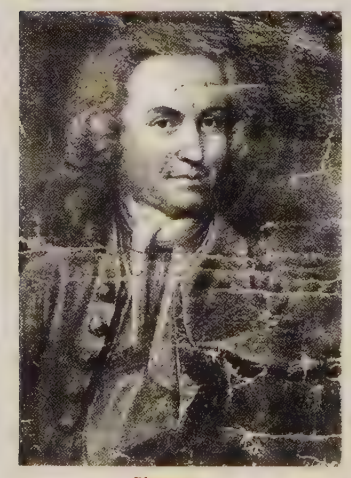
Before I left Angel's home, he showed me some mementos hanging on his living room wall. Among them was a framed letter from a grateful Joaquín Rodrigo written after Angel and Pepe premiered his duo guitar work, in Spain in 1970. Next to it is an official document from Juan Carlos, the King of Spain, dated 1999, knighting Angel and bestowing upon him the Grand Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic. I drove away with thoughts of Angel Romero's many accomplishments flooding my mind. He's had a singular career with extraordinary highlights. Given his youthful vigor, there are more to come. **CG**



MULTIMEDIA BACHSTRAVAGANZA

QUODLIBET NO. 2

The portrait said to be of J. S. Bach, painted when he was court organist in Weimar (c. 1714), by J. E. Rentsch the Elder

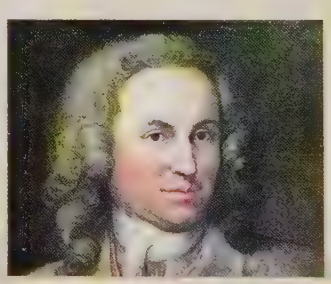


Photogravure

Is this really a portrait of J. S. Bach painted while he served as Weimar Court Organist between 1708 and 1717? Attributed to Weimar Court painter J. E. Rentsch the Elder, over time this portrait has become the one that pops up in one's mind's eye when conjuring a mental image of Bach as a young man.

Based on careful physiognomic comparison with portraits known to be Bach, we must conclude that what we have here is a fine portrait of an unidentified gentleman, but, sad to say, not of J. S. Bach.

In 1907 the portrait was restored. And it is likely that the restorer, mayb for the glory, maybe from a sense of sentimentality, genuine excitement, or for some other reason, sought to persuade viewers that the young man in question is indeed Bach himself.



The nose was deliberately but subtly altered in the restoration process; not bridge appear to have that now is to be s nose, but also t nose has bee bridge to h

STEVEN HANCOFF'S NEW SOLO GUITAR RECORDING OF THE 'SIX SUITES FOR CELLO' IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

BY BLAIR JACKSON

I first encountered the guitar artistry of Steven Hancoff a dozen years ago, when I reviewed a fine CD he made called *The Single Petal of a Rose: Duke Ellington for Solo Guitar, Vol. 2* for *Mix* magazine. I was intrigued enough by it that I went out and bought the first volume, *Duke Ellington for Solo Guitar*, also excellent.

However, when Hancoff's three-CD Bach set, *From Tragedy to Transcendence: The Six Suites for 'Cello Solo for Acoustic Guitar* arrived here at *Classical Guitar*'s office, I didn't initially make the connection that these incredibly disparate projects came from the same guy. And as the newly minted editor of *Classical Guitar* magazine, I raised a somewhat skeptical eyebrow over the notion that a fingerpicking acoustic guitarist—rather than a nylon-string classical player—was taking on the *Cello Suites*.

But then a curious thing happened. I went onto YouTube and watched a series of short videos Hancoff made promoting his project. Over a backdrop of him playing a movement from one of the *Cello Suites*, he laid out a fascinating biography of Bach accompanied by hundreds of images—paintings old and modern, sculptures, 17th- and 18th-century documents, drawings and engravings of people and places from Bach's world, etc.—that I found utterly engrossing. Independently, I started going through the CDs and I enjoyed them immensely; I don't know if it helped that I've been a huge fan of solo steel-string guitar music since I first discovered John Fahey in the late 1960s.

It turns out those YouTube teaser videos were just the tip of the iceberg—as is the CD set. For what Hancoff has ultimately produced is an incredibly rich multimedia exploration of the *Cello Suites*, Bach's universe, and his influence through the centuries, expressed through the CDs and also a four-volume iBook that blends music, videos, and well over a thousand still images—like a Ken Burns documentary gone wild!—into a vivid and compelling tapestry of history, stories, ruminations, and fascinating tangents that grow like vines off the main Bach saga. It goes in directions you'd never expect, which is part of the fun of it.

The e-book is divided into four parts: *Volume 1* is on the life of Bach; *Vol. 2* deals with his legacy; the jumping-off point for *Vol. 3* is Pablo Casals, the great Catalonian cellist who "discovered" the *Cello Suites* at the age of 13 (in 1889) and is wholly responsible for bringing Bach's forgotten masterpieces to light; and *Vol. 4* is called *From Tragedy to Transcendence*, which is, Hancoff says, an attempt to "articulate the mystery of the greatness of Bach."

Working alone and with a gifted Chinese exchange student named Jiayi Lu, who was getting her master's degree in audio-visual technology from American University in Washington, DC, Hancoff spent years unearthing the mountains of images that populate his book, drawing as much as possible from the copyright-free public domain, and also approaching more than 300 contemporary artists about using their works inspired by Bach or Casals in his grand opus. He speaks excitedly about stumbling upon the work of "a genius named Matthaüs Merian who, before 1650, published a book of copper-plate engravings of something like 2,500 villages and towns, including the town where Bach was born, Eisenach," but he was equally moved by the modern masterworks that he uses throughout. For Hancoff, Bach is an artist for *all times*.

In the steel-string acoustic guitar world, Hancoff is best known for his skillful and heartfelt interpretations of different strains of 19th- and early-20th century American music, from ragtime to jazz and other forms. Indeed, it was his mastery of those idioms that allowed him to become an Artistic Ambassador, sponsored by the US State Department, playing American music (often in tandem with banjo virtuoso Buddy Wachter) all over the world for 15 years.

When Hancoff and I spoke in the fall of 2015, our conversation primarily centered on the musical side of his enormous Bach undertaking.

CLASSICAL GUITAR: How does the Bach project dovetail from other projects you've been involved with? Is there a musical link or some spiritual connection that takes you from Scott Joplin and Ellington and those other American musicians and ties it to Bach? Or was it just immersing yourself into something new and different?

STEVEN HANCOFF: It wasn't about new and different. Here's the story: I bought my first "expensive" guitar when I was around 20 years old—this is maybe 1968, '69. I used to get *Sing Out!* magazine and I wanted a Martin [acoustic] guitar, so I went to my local music store in Baltimore [Maryland], called Schubert's and the guy behind the counter said, "I'll order you one." I came back in two weeks and that's how I got that guitar. As I was leaving, the guy, who I thought must be "Mr. Schubert," said, "Here try this," and he handed me a guitar transcription of the Bach *Lute Suites*, rather than a Beatles or Bob Dylan songbook or something. So that's the music I actually learned to read music from. I used to struggle and stumble through them—they're very difficult. I didn't know anything—I didn't have a teacher. I was into Dylan, like everybody else.

Many years later, in the mid-'80s, I was playing in southern California and I had two days off, and I knew that Michael Lorimer, who had been Segovia's student, lived down there, so I called him up and asked if I could spend a couple of days talking to him about stuff and getting a couple of lessons. He asked about my background and I mentioned the *Lute Suites* and he said, "Well, the *Cello Suites* are more 'guitaristic,'" as he put it. So after that tour I got a hold of [Lorimer's] transcriptions of the *Cello Suites*. At that point, I think I was working on my New Orleans album [*New Orleans Guitar Solos*], and to warm my hands up every day, I would play one of the *Cello Suites*, and I just fell in love with the music, and at some point I decided I'd like to do my own transcriptions.

About ten years after that, I was at my old friend Ruth's place in Greenwich Village [NY], and her boyfriend at the time was a producer, and he'd just produced an album by John Lewis, the pianist for the Modern Jazz Quartet, playing Bach. He brought it home and I listened to it, lying on the floor, and it just blew my mind. I said to myself, "I've *got* to immerse myself in Bach sometime." It was heavenly.

But then Buddy Wachter and I got the gig with the State Department to be Artistic Ambassadors and travel the world, so I never had time after that. We did something like 45 countries, some more than once, doing this program of Americana. So I'd start with Stephen Foster and do songs of the cowboys and the Civil War and the railroads and all that, and go up through Ellington and Gershwin and all the guys we could think of in between.

CG: When you finally did get around to the *Cello Suites* project, what was the appeal of doing the transcriptions yourself? Did you go through other people's versions and find things that were either not to your liking or not suited to your playing?

HANCOFF: To my knowledge, there are five publications of the complete *Cello Suites*,

including Michael Lorimer's. Some of them have changed the notes because it makes it 'more guitaristic,' some of them only add an occasional bass note to ground your ear to the center, or whatever. Michael's and the one by French guitarist Michel Sadanowsky, are more in keeping with how I conceptualize it, which is pretty full of harmony and makes it sound like it was written for guitar—that's the main thing.

You're not just transporting these notes to a different instrument, although people have done that with Bach—including Bach himself. The idea for me was to make it into a guitar piece, and to be more specific, if I was going to spend my hours focusing on this with my attention and my energies, I wanted it to express *me*, too. To stay true to Bach's intention, but to express me, and to do that took completely immersing myself in these melodies—because that's what they are. I concluded ultimately that the *Cello Suites* are the voice of Bach in a dialogue with his wife who had just died.

To give you a very basic outline, Bach wrote them when he was 35 years old, and up until the age of 32 his life was nothing but tragedy. Everybody close to him had died—he was an orphan at nine—and the gigs he got were horrible. He was working for drunkard dukes and heavy-handed church people who didn't care a whit about what he was doing. And, significantly, by then he hadn't written any of his great masterpieces.

At 32 he finally gets a job writing music for a prince who loves music and is a good musician, and he's finally contented. He and his wife move to this little town and after he's been there for three years, he and the prince go away for a month to a fancy spa; Bach is 35 years old. He comes back and his wife is dead and buried. That's when he writes the *Violin Sonatas and Partitas* [which have also been arranged for guitar] and the *Cello Suites*; his first real masterpieces. I concluded that the violin is her voice and the cello is his voice. So I felt doing the *Cello Suites* was taking the voice of Bach and putting them onto a stringed instrument.

Now, the cello is a one-note-at-a-time instrument, but a guitar is idiomatically suited to play chords and bass lines and harmonies. So the challenge was to harmonize Bach's *Cello Suites*—get every one of Bach's notes and keep true to the profundity of his musical and emotional content, but to harmonize it according to what he implied by what he did on just four strings [of the cello].

It was such a gift to be able to jump into that, because one of the qualities of playing the *Cello Suites* is you never ever get to a note where you say, "He should have used a different note." They're all the right notes. Mischa Maisky, one of the great cellists, called [the *Cellos Suites*] "dictation from God," and yeah, I could go along with that!

There has never been and never will be another Bach. The quality of mind and thought and the music he made—no one is ever going to do that again. Casals called it "The Miracle of Bach." It is so beyond what our comprehension can fathom, and to me, what made this such a profound experience was the question, "How in the world did he do it?" His wife dies, and that's when he starts writing this torrent of iconic, immortal masterpieces. He didn't say "I hate life. I'm a victim." None of that. Instead it deepened his experience of who he was.

CG: Not that many people have recorded or played all six of the *Cello Suites*.

HANCOFF: A lot of people have played *Suite No. 1* because it's gorgeous, it's perfect, and technically it's probably the least demanding of the six. Segovia recorded *Suite No. 3*.

But it's true, not many have done all six. There's an Austrian guitarist [Andreas von Wangenheim] who did it, and another by Kazuhito Yamashita, who to my ears is the greatest guitarist who ever lived. In fact, when I got Kazuhito Yamashita's recording, I almost decided not to do mine. Cellist and playwright Harry Clark once called him "the Franz Liszt of the guitar." There's also a guitarist named Michael Nicolella who did it recently. In fact, Michael and I just exchanged recordings. His came in yesterday's mail. But mine's very different. No one will do it the way I do it, because it's *me*, and of course because it's on acoustic guitar.

CG: Let's talk about that for a minute, since that's the elephant in the room—the fact that it's on steel-string rather than nylon-string guitar, unlike most of what gets billed as "classical guitar." Is everything you do on the *Suites* translatable to classical guitar?

HANCOFF: Sure. The transcriptions are the same notes, the same fingers.

CG: Then what does the steel-string bring to it for you?

HANCOFF: Well, the reality is it's my instrument, and to play it I use picks, and if you try to use picks on a nylon-string it sounds horrible. Of course there are differences. The tone of the classical guitar is warmer than mine, but on the other hand, mine rings more brightly. There are other differences that are technical in nature, and also the acoustic guitar is louder and the unwound strings—my B and E—are brighter and less sweet; less fat. One of the drawbacks of steel-strings is they're not as influenced by vibrato as a classical guitar. My bass strings, the wound strings, of which there are four, are maybe more brash than on a nylon-string.

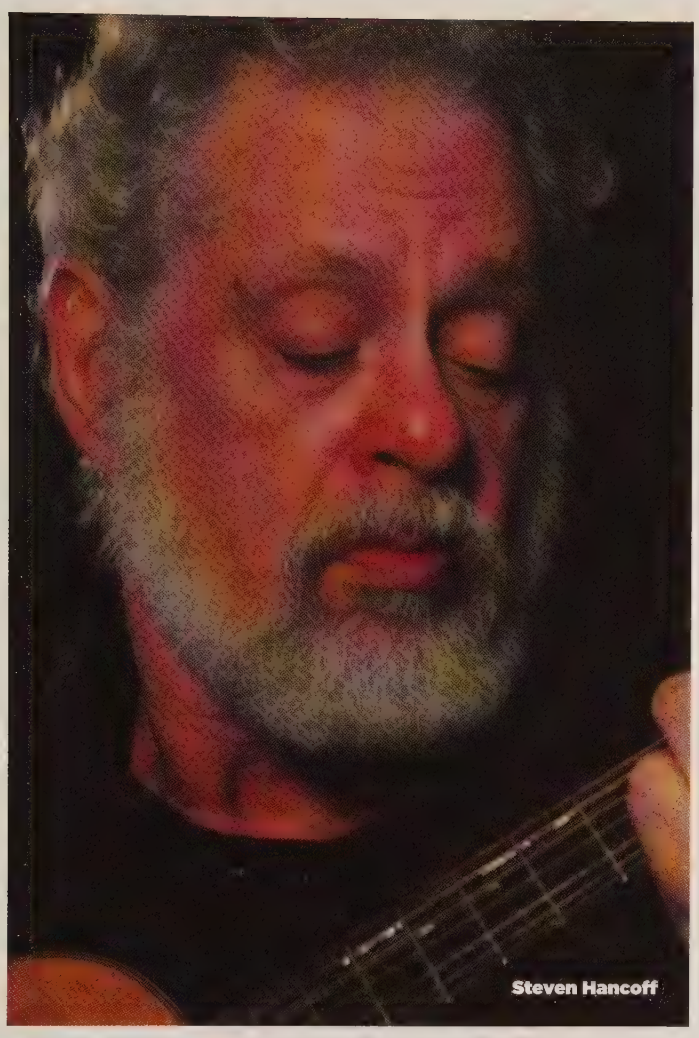
But to me, they're both guitars. Over the years I've probably listened to a little more classical guitar than acoustic guitar—though I love flatpicked acoustic guitar. Tony Rice is a genius. I love Doc Watson, too.

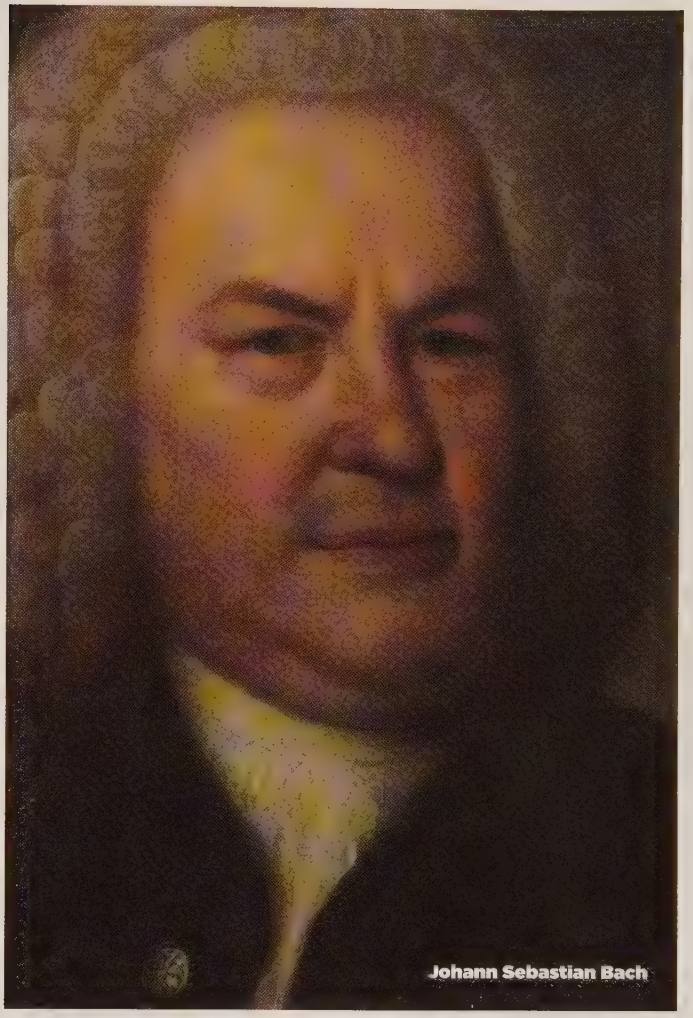
CG: What's the guitar you play on the Suites? It's not the old Martin…

HANCOFF: No, no. I was playing in California in the 1980s and when I got to San Francisco I visited [pioneering Windham Hill steel-string guitarist] Alex de Grassi. I'd been looking for a guitar-maker for myself. I played one chord on [de Grassi's] guitar and I said, "Who made this?" And that was it! It was Ervin Somogyi in Berkeley, and he built me the guitar I used for my other CDs.

When I was getting ready to do the Bach—nine years before I started, as it turned out—I said, "Ervin, I need a guitar that's a jumbo, not a modified dreadnought." Because I wanted a sweeter, deeper bass. So he built me [another] guitar.

Some people have said to me, "That sounds like a harpsichord!"—which totally mystifies me. But they have pointed out that steel-strings might be more in keeping with what Bach may have heard in his inner ear, because that's what the claviers of his day were strung with.


Steven Hancoff


Johann Sebastian Bach

CG: What can a cello do that a guitar can't?

HANCOFF: Here's the most essential difference: With a guitar, you get the most volume the instant you pluck the string, and thereafter the note decays. With a cello, you can start soft and make it loud and you can hold that note almost forever. You can do a tremolo on a guitar and pretend you're doing that, but it's not the same thing.

Fortunately in the *Cello Suites* there's not that much of that. It's single-note melodies and as a bunch of cellists have pointed out, what Bach had in mind was to take those four strings and, without chords, with only melody and arpeggiated passages, be harmonically clear.

Another reason why these pieces of music feel so intimate is the way you hold a guitar and a cello—in a sense, you're *embracing* it. You're holding a curvy figure right next to your body; they have that in common. That's not true with the violin. There's a great two-CD set of [Bach's] *Violin Sonatas and Partitas* by Paul Galbraith, who plays an eight-string guitar and holds it like a cello—his has an end-tailpiece but he plucks it like a guitar. It's truly gorgeous.

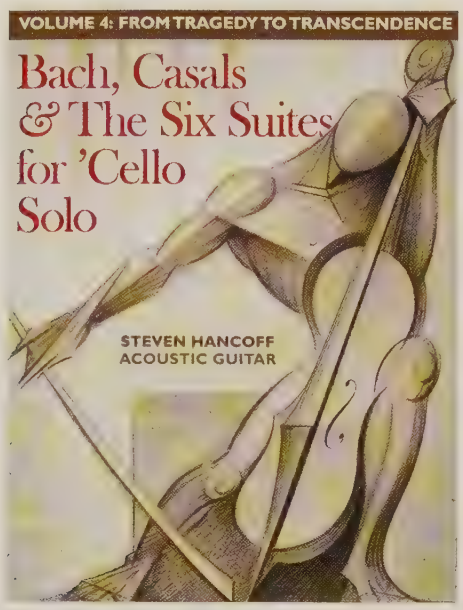
CG: Have you played the partitas and the sonatas?

HANCOFF: I've stumbled through. In fact, I have had in mind maybe that will be my next project. On the other hand, I've thought I'd like to do an album in honor of [great country guitar picker] Merle Travis. I know that sounds like the extreme ends of a very big spectrum . . .

CG: Well, that's one reason people love to play guitar.

HANCOFF: That's right. Music is music. I've played a lot of the classical repertoire in the privacy of my own room. Many, many years ago, when I was literally broke and staying with a friend in San Francisco, as a gift he bought me the guitar part for the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, and that was when I found out how wide the spectrum is.

CG: I notice you've given subtitles, in a sense, to each of the *Cello Suites*: "Ecstasy and Optimism" for No. 1, "Introspection and Sorrow" for No. 2, "Extrospection and Excitement" for No. 3, and so on. Is it treading on dangerous ground to, in effect, impose your own views about what the music "means"?



Volume 4: From Tragedy to Transcendence

HANCOFF: No, it's not dangerous. Here's the deal. Every cellist is sort of compelled in his or her own way to write down or articulate what each of the suites expresses.

The last chapter of the iBook is on the meaning of the suites, because Casals called the first one "Optimistic," the second "Tragic," the third "Heroic," the fourth "Grandiose," the fifth "Tempestuous" and the sixth "Bucolic." [Cellists] Yo-Yo Ma and [Janos] Starker, and [Mstislav] Rostropovich say what they say about it. Nigel North, the magnificent lutenist who recorded these, gave me his list.

And Volume Four is literally a video exposition—my unique take—on how Bach metabolized his agony in such a way that he turned himself into *Bach*, the great genius of Western music. The bedrock of Western harmony, for goodness sake, and he did not allow himself to let his tragedies define his life or, indeed, who he was.

For me, each *Suite* is a stepping stone in that process, a process I want to be able to do for myself.

CG: So it's a tradition.

HANCOFF: Right.

CG: And of course, every listener will come up with his or her own interpretation anyway. I'm impressed you're providing your transcriptions for free.

HANCOFF: Well, the best thing I can imagine is that after I'm dead and gone, guitar players will be trying to play these things. I can't tell you how many times I went through records trying to figure out what the guitar players were doing—that's how you learned, right? So this is just a little gift to the world.

The free transcriptions can be requested from stevenhancoff.com

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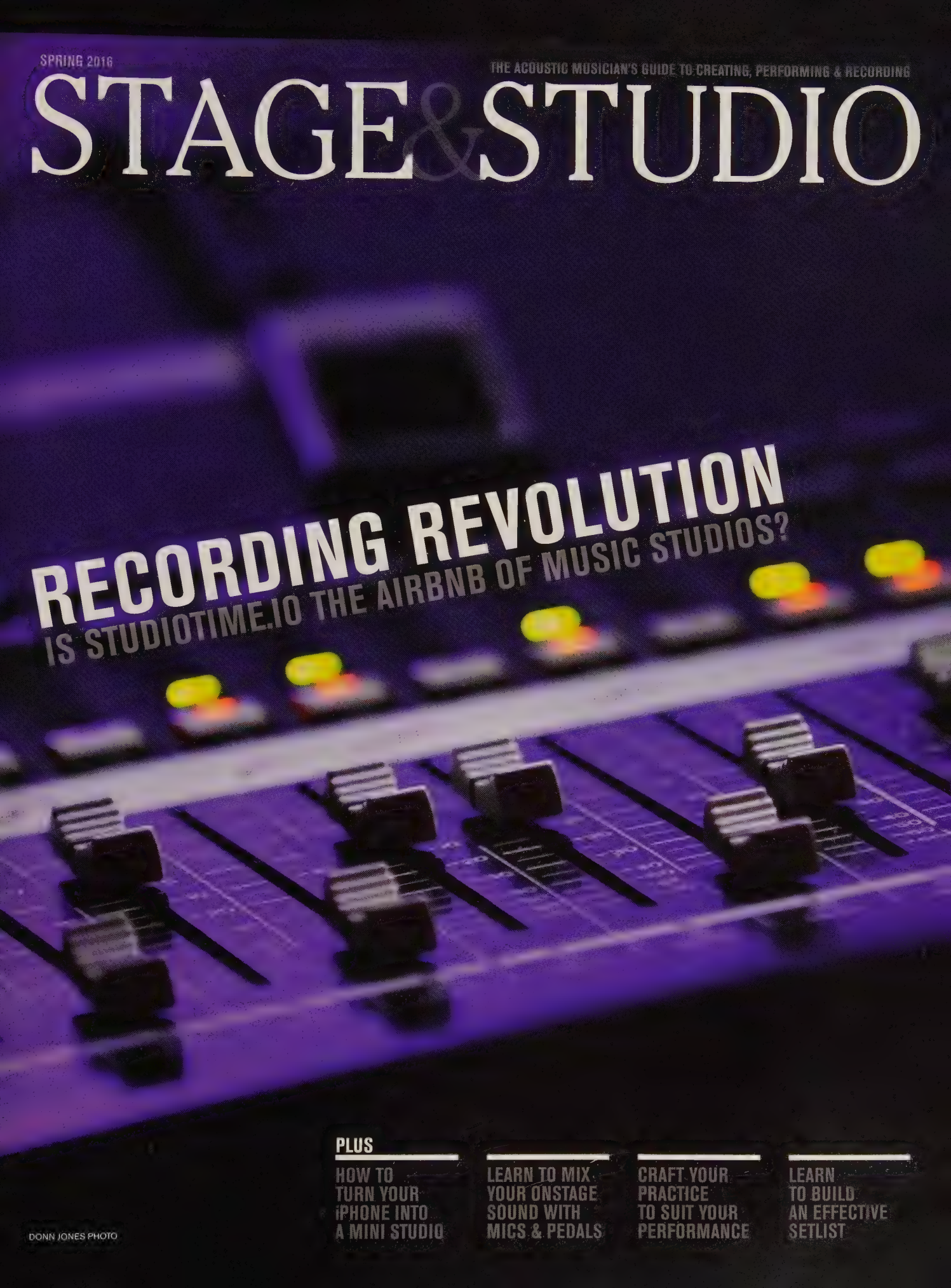

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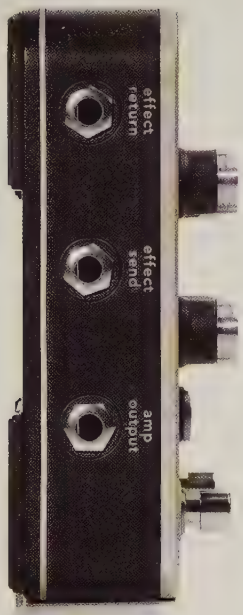

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HOW TO RECORD ON AN iOS DEVICE

Improve the recording quality of your iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch with these dedicated apps and mics

BY JASON BORISOFF

The Apple iPhone has become an all-pervasive force in many musicians' day-to-day lives. The ability to record audio is an obvious thing to include in a stock iPhone, as Apple does in the form of Voice Memos, but some of the third-party recording apps—including GarageBand—and additional hardware give musicians impressive options for laying down a new song, a demo, a fleeting lick, an incredible street guitarist, or an entire lesson, anytime and anywhere. If you have an iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch, here are some recording options available to you.

VOICE MEMOS

Voice Memos comes with your iPhone. It's a very basic app that's pretty idiot proof. Hit record and then talk, play, or sing into the built-in mic (iPod Touch 2G users will need an external mic), and hit stop when you're done. It's a good idea to navigate to the file-management page to rename your clips so you can easily find them later on. You can also e-mail any sound file under 15 MB directly from your phone or sync to your computer to transfer your sound clips.

Voice Memos is not designed to produce high-quality audio. It doesn't have any quality options, and it records to a compressed M4A digital format. When recording basic blues fingerpicking, the sound was somewhat grainy and unclear, with a slight roll-off of bass and high frequencies. While Voice Memos does suffice for capturing musical ideas, the inability to record uncompressed files results in a significant loss of sound quality.

THIRD-PARTY MEMO APPS

Thankfully, there are a host of other great apps similar to Voice Memo that include more useful functions and will significantly improve your audio quality. Apps iTalk (free or $1.99 for a premium upgade), Audio Memos (99¢), and SpeakEasy (99¢) are all popular and inexpensive alternatives that offer better file-organization features and adjustable sound quality, with the option of recording to uncompressed file formats. When shopping for recording apps, check out the sound-quality options. In general, uncompressed formats, like WAV and AIFF, will provide better sound quality than compressed formats like MP3 and M4A.

MULTITRACK RECORDERS

If you're not satisfied with laying down just one track, consider looking into a multitrack app. While generally more expensive than voice recorders, apps like like GarageBand ($4.99), MultiTrack DAW ($9.99), Audiostar ($4.99), RecordStudio ($4.99), and StudioApp ($1.99) offer basic multitrack recording capabilities that allow you to dub in layered parts.

MultiTrack DAW, for instance, allows you to record and edit up to 24 tracks of professional CD-quality, 44.1 kHz/16-bit audio. The only catch is that you can only record one track at a time, but, for example, a songwriter could conceivably produce an acceptable finished product with nothing but an iPhone and a compatible external mic. Multitrack apps are relatively simple to use and come complete with basic DAW controls like panning, level, mute, solo, and arm record, plus adjustable input and monitor levels. Some, like Monle and

MultiTrack DAW, offer basic editing functions such as audio-region splicing and cross-fading. Though they don't hold a candle to professional computer-based DAWs like Pro Tools or Cubase, the functionality of these iPhone multitrackers is very impressive, considering their price and portability.

When it comes time to share what you've recorded, there are a few different ways to transfer your files to a computer, depending on the app. The most common way is through e-mail attachment, however there is a 15 MB file limit. Wi-Fi sync is a common option for larger files, as well as uploading to SoundCloud. Some apps even allow you to access FTP servers.

EXTERNAL MICS AND AUDIO INTERFACES

To reach their fullest potential, recording apps require external microphones, and there are several after-market products that can increase the sound quality of your recordings. One option is to get an external microphone like the Olympus ME51S stereo mic ($29), iRig Acoustic ($49.99; it can be pairedpair with the AmpliTube modeling app), the Blue Mikey stereo condenser mic ($99), which connects to the dock adapter. While providing greatly improved gain and frequency response over the built-in mic, these external microphones do not allow you to monitor sound at the same time you're recording, which makes them incompatible with multitrackers, where you need to listen and record simultaneously.

A great solution to this dilemma is Sonoma Wire Works' GuitarJack ($199), which is designed to be used with Sonoma's FourTrack app ($9.99) but is compatible with most other multitrack apps. The GuitarJack plugs directly into an iPhone and iPod Touch docking jack and gives you one 1/8-inch headphone output and one external stereo mic input with 60 dB of level control and pad, normal, and boost modes.

There also are several good interfaces on the market that can be used to connect mics or instruments directly to your iPhone. Those include the Sonoma Wire Works' GuitarJack 2 USB interface ($70), the Behringer Guitar Link UCG ($40), and the Apogee Jam 96k Guitar Interface ($120).

While the iPhone may not yet be poised to replace a home studio, or even your portable stereo digital recorder, cell phone recording apps are gaining remarkable ground. S&S

RECORDING REVOLUTION

A new website aims to be the Airbnb of music studios

BY PATRICK SULLIVAN

GENEVIEVE PIERSON

Shelby Earl

The idea seemed too good to be original, Michael Williams remembers thinking. "A studio is a focal point of music," he says. "It's sacred. No matter what you're doing, it goes back to the recording studio."

So somewhere on the internet, Williams reasoned, there had to be a "sharing economy" website designed to help musicians find studios and book time. Airbnb, after all, began revamping vacation rentals back in 2008. "But I started researching and couldn't find anything like that for studios," the 27-year-old says. So the Los Angeles-area computer programmer swung into action, completing the first version of a studio sharing site in a single evening.

Williams isn't a musician, though he has connections in the music world. He's been building websites since he was teenager and recently founded the tech job site Codeity.com.

The site he dubbed Studiotime (studiotime.io) allows both studios and musicians to create profiles. Artists can search by city, check availability, and book time online. A rating system permits public feedback. "Artists can easily compare what's out there," Williams says. "They can see which studios have the equipment they need. They can figure out, 'Here's what I can expect to spend.'"

Studiotime also handles payment, which must be made in advance. Musicians can use credit cards or Paypal, and the studio can accept or deny reservations. "We take a 10 percent cut once the studio accepts," Williams says.

The site went live in March and drew 300,000 visits in the first week. Several thousand musicians have joined. So have hundreds of studios, from soundproofed basements to well-known facilities working with major-label acts.

'I can see this being really useful if you have a pressing need to get a recording project done quickly and don't have time to call around to find an open studio.'
SHELBY EARL

Eastside Sound Studios
in New York City is featured
on studiotime.io.

ROLAND MUENGER

Can the "sharing economy" concept work in the studio world, where personal relationships have long dominated?

Even some Studiotime studios are skeptical.

Bryan Matheson has run Skyline Studios in Oakland, California, for 22 years. He's a producer, recording engineer, and Grammy-nominated vocalist. Matheson joined Studiotime in April, but hasn't had a single booking through the site—and he sounds dubious of the concept.

"I don't know that people really have a problem booking studio time," says Matheson. "This might be a solution in search of a problem."

He's also concerned about one of the site's fundamental features—it allows you to book studio time without actually talking to the person who runs the place where you'll be making music.

"When someone calls me to book time, I engage with them," Matheson says. "I find out where they're trying to go and support them. 'Oh, you want to track acoustic drums—we have a lot of experience.' 'Oh, you want to do metal guitars—I've got a guy you should call.'"

That pre-session engagement is especially important for newer musicians, Matheson says. "It's OK to not have a clue," he says. "But you need to get a clue before you come into the studio and waste a bunch of money. So I try to help them out. And I don't think that's the kind of thing you automate."

Andrew De Lucia, owner of Blue Rhode Studio in North Hollywood, has a more positive take. He's already had one or two bookings through the site. "It was quick and easy," he says. "They messaged me, made the payment, and then they came in and that was about it."

Studiotime, he says, is a boon to independent studios that offer a good value to musicians. "You've got quality studios charging a fair price that nobody knows about," De Lucia says. "This will help people find them."

Musicians that have used Studiotime are hard to locate, since the site is so new. But some artists see potential. To Seattle singer and songwriter Shelby Earl, the site looks like a useful tool that could help musicians find a specific kind of facility or piece of gear. "I can also see this being really useful if you have a pressing need to get a recording project done quickly and you don't have time to call around to find an open studio," she says.

Musicians new to recording might find the site especially helpful. "I know when I set out to make my first solo record I had no idea what reasonable studio rates were, or what studios were even out there," Earl says.

But many well-regarded Seattle studios aren't yet on the site, she notes. "Like anything, I suppose, I would want to know the listings were pretty comprehensive before I trusted Studiotime as a one-stop shop," she says.

New York City cellist Sean Grissom, who has produced a dozen recordings, thinks musicians with no studio relationships might find Studiotime helpful. But he also stresses the importance of knowing who you're working with. "I think going into the studio is like a doctor's or mechanic's visit," he says. "Knowing the people, environment, and personalities is vital to help an artist get the best result for their time and money."

Other musicians note that Studiotime doesn't seem to have many ratings yet—and sparse profiles make it hard to see what some studios actually offer.

User feedback is already prompting Williams to revamp the site. He wants to help studios build better profiles and allow easier comparison of equipment. "We're so new and we've gained so much traction in so little time, so we're still looking at all those things, he says. "But we are redesigning and we will relaunch the site soon." S&S

GROUP DYNAMICS

How to mix yourself onstage by working a mic and using boost pedals

BY SCOTT NYGAARD

If you play in a band where you're required to fill the roles of rhythm and lead instrumentalist, you know that the onstage volume level needed for each can be very different. Whether you play in an acoustic-electric band with drums, electric bass, keyboards, and so on; in an all-acoustic bluegrass band that clusters around one mic; or any other kind of group that uses a combination of mics and pickups onstage, it can be difficult to match the level of your solos and fills with your rhythm instrumental level. For example, most guitarists, especially aggressive rhythm players, tend to play chords and strums harder than single-note melodies, and it's difficult for anyone to raise the level of their solos above the rest of the band simply by playing harder.

Fortunately there are a few ways to adjust your volume level onstage so that your solos, fills, and melodies are audible and your rhythm playing doesn't overwhelm the band. If you play into mics, you can "work" the mic, varying your dynamics by getting closer or farther away from the mic, and if you only use a pickup to amplify your acoustic guitar, fiddle, mandolin, or ukulele, you can use a volume or boost pedal to increase the gain when you're soloing. For many players, a combination of these methods works best. Here are some tips on "mixing" your sound onstage in different performing situations.

WORK THE MIC

If you only use a standing mic to amplify your instrument through a PA, your "mixing" options are simple: increase or decrease the distance from the mic to the instrument. The advantage of working a mic is that you can get more volume variations than the two levels of gain you get from a boost pedal. Working a mic is a bit like using a mixing-board fader to control the level of your instrument, and this can allow you to increase the volume slightly for fills or adjust your overall volume depending on the requirements of the song—getting closer to the mic for a quieter fingerpicking accompaniment part or farther away for a boisterous basher.

One disadvantage of only using a mic is that you have to pay close attention to where you're standing onstage. Wandering too far off-mic will effectively silence your instrument from the audience's perspective, and veering into the mic accidentally can produce volume spikes and feedback. If you sing and play, you'll need to pay attention to your proximity to two mics at once.

To get the best results from working a mic, you should become intimately familiar with the mic you're using. If you're a touring musician who plays through a different PA every night, you may choose to travel with your own mic, but most good acoustic sound engineers have chosen their mics to match the rest of their system. You can consult the sound engineer to see if he or she wants to use it, but keep in mind that every mic sounds and reacts differently with different

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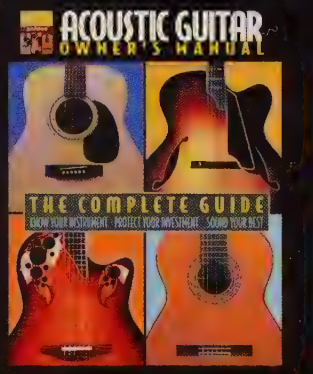

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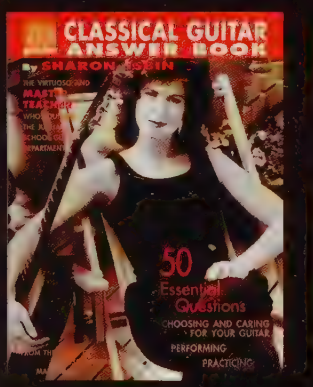

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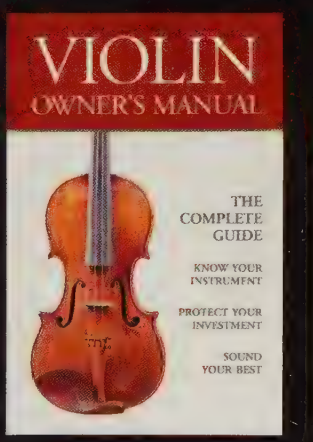

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PA components, so bringing your own mic is no guarantee that your guitar will sound the same from gig to gig.

Whatever mic you use, the sound check is your opportunity to check out the characteristics of the mic and determine how to position yourself to get the best volume and tone. Get to the sound check on time (or early), so you can check the guitar first. This gives the engineer time to work on your sound and gives you time to see how the mic reacts. In a bluegrass band, I generally stay about 7 to 8 inches away from the mic for rhythm and move in as close as I can for solos. But many mics have a proximity effect, which increases the bass response when you get close to it. Make sure your instrument doesn't get so boomy when you move in that the increased bass effectively drowns out your solo, a potential problem for guitarists. The closer the mic is to the soundhole, the louder you'll be, but most of the time, getting close to the soundhole increases the bass frequencies too dramatically, so it's best to point the mic either at the fretboard around the 14th fret (the best choice for flatpickers) or down by the lower part of the bridge, as long as your hand doesn't get in the way. There are some mic and guitar combinations, for example, that won't get too boomy when the mic is close to the soundhole, but you should determine this at sound check, not in the middle of the gig.

BOOST PEDALS

If you use a pickup to amplify your acoustic-electric instrument, whether through a PA, an amp, or both, one of the best ways to vary your volume is with a boost pedal that allows you to switch between two preset volumes (see "Get a Boost" below for some specific models). While some players are comfortable using a volume pedal, which provides infinitely variable adjustment between the maximum and minimum settings, it can be distracting to be constantly worrying about what your foot is doing. And it can be difficult to accurately preset the two specific volumes you primarily need.

One thing to keep in mind, however, is that boost pedals, at least those currently available, only work with mono signals, so if you're using a dual-source pickup system with a stereo cable, you're out of luck. You should also be careful about radically boosting the signal of an internal mic, which is more prone to feedback than a pickup, especially if you're running this signal into the monitors.

You can also try using an A/B switch into two amp or PA channels, setting one channel for your rhythm volume and the other for your solo volume. It's cheaper than a dedicated pedal, and since the signal path stays clean, it can sound great, although if you have a few band members doing this, you can use up PA channels pretty quickly.

MIC AND PEDAL

You can get a lot of flexibility by combining a pickup with a standing mic, increasing your signal by working the mic, stepping on your pedal, or both. If you like to roam the stage untethered, you can use the pickup signal as your basic sound, and then step up to the mic to increase your lead volume, add a bit of "air" to your solo sound, and focus the audience's attention on your solo. Most players who use this setup run a pickup-only signal in the monitors to reduce the chance of feedback.

GET A BOOST

Many affordable acoustic instrument preamps include a volume boost among their many functions. Most boost pedals designed for electric guitarists color the signal to some degree and are often intended to drive amps into distortion, but the Fulltone Fat-Boost ($134) or Seymour Duncan Pickup Booster ($79) can be used as a clean boost pedal by rolling off the "drive" entirely and adjusting the treble and bass controls, making the tone of the boosted signal nearly indistinguishable from the unboosted signal. Some graphic EQ pedals, such as the seven-band Boss GE-7 ($99), can also be used as a boost pedal, either with no EQ changes, or with a different EQ setting for the boosted signal if you prefer. S&S

PULL IT TOGETHER IN PRACTICE—KEEP IT TOGETHER ONSTAGE

The way you approach music in the practice session can greatly affect your success in performance

BY LOUISE LEE

How you practice is a direct reflection of how you perform. Even if your playing in the practice room sounds good, you need to practice and learn the piece in a manner robust enough to withstand the pressure of onstage performance. After all, with the stage, lights, excitement, and expectant audience, performing isn't at all like the practice studio. Hans Sturm, assistant professor of double bass and jazz studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and professor emeritus at Ball State University, offers some ideas on how to practice, so your playing holds up in performance.

DON'T DIVE IN

Let's say you're learning a new piece. If you're using sheet music, don't just put the music on the stand and start sightreading. The problem with jumping in that way is that "you'll make many mistakes and they'll become part of your memory, strongly associated with that crucial first experience of the piece," Sturm says. During the stress of a performance, you're likely to make those early mistakes again even if you supposedly "unlearned" them.

You want to reduce the number of early mistakes, so you don't have to undo them in the first place. Here's how: First, listen to a good recording, and don't even look at the music. Just close your eyes and listen, Sturm says. Internalize the piece, and sing along. Then, listen with the music in hand. Build an interpretation, and visualize yourself playing the work.

Then review the piece without the recording, singing it internally and imagining the physical requirements of playing it. Mark up the music, creating solutions to problems even before they crop up. Only then should you take up the instrument, since you now have a good impression in your mind of melodies and rhythms. If you play something wrong, you'll notice immediately and can address it right away, so you'll have less to unlearn and fewer early mistakes lurking in the back of your mind.

DON'T 'BULLDOZE'

A common, but misguided way of practicing is starting at the beginning of the piece and "bulldozing" your way through until you make a mistake, repeating the offending measure a few times until the flub is "fixed," looping back to the beginning, playing until another mistake is made and fixed, looping back, and so on. This practice "adds anxiety to a performance because you're practicing

stopping at each mistake," Sturm says. You should "make each moment in practice a mini performance—always performing the work with a performance mentality, whether it is only two beats or four movements," he adds.

Instead of bulldozing, try "framing." Select a "frame size," whether a few notes, a few bars, or an entire passage that you want to work on. Play it without stopping and ask yourself where the problems are only afterward. Then resize the frame to focus on the spot or spots where you had problems. "The key is not to stop—to complete the task," says Sturm, noting that when you're onstage, after all, you're playing an entire piece without stopping. Focusing on one issue at a time within a frame will let you "hone in and refine issues in great detail, all while practicing performing."

If you're not going to use the music during the performance, don't use it in practice, either.

USE THE SHEET MUSIC—OR LOSE IT

Players might have a piece almost memorized and during practice look at the music only in passages where they think they need it. Then in the performance, they bring the sheet music out with them just in case, but if they glance at the music, they risk looking at the wrong place in the adrenaline of the moment and becoming startled, Sturm says. This is especially true for classical or jazz players. The best way to avoid being thrown off track by the music is to either use the score entirely or don't use it at all. If you're planning to use the music onstage, practice with it and read the entire page, he says. If you're not going to use the music during the performance, don't use it in practice, either.

QUIET THE JUDGE

Everyone has an internal judge who's waiting to stop and berate you at every mistake. The negativity can wear you down and distract you in the practice room, so give your internal judge another role that's more positive and helps you strengthen your performances. "Ask your judge to be a silent observer during the performance of a frame," Sturm says. "After you have completed the frame, ask your judge to share a specific observation to help the level of performance improve. This gives the judge a positive role and helps to limit unproductive negative opinion. You are slowly changing the internal dialog to work for you rather than against you."

During practice, choose the frame to work on and have your judge rate your performance on a scale from 1 to 5 before repeating the frame again. "Over time, your judge will evolve into a role more like a working partner and you will find that you will begin to have more control over the internal dialogue," Sturm says.

"This is not to say that the overtly negative voice of the judge won't ever return to haunt you, but you will have begun to engage the voice, and its power to disturb your focus will be diminished." S&S

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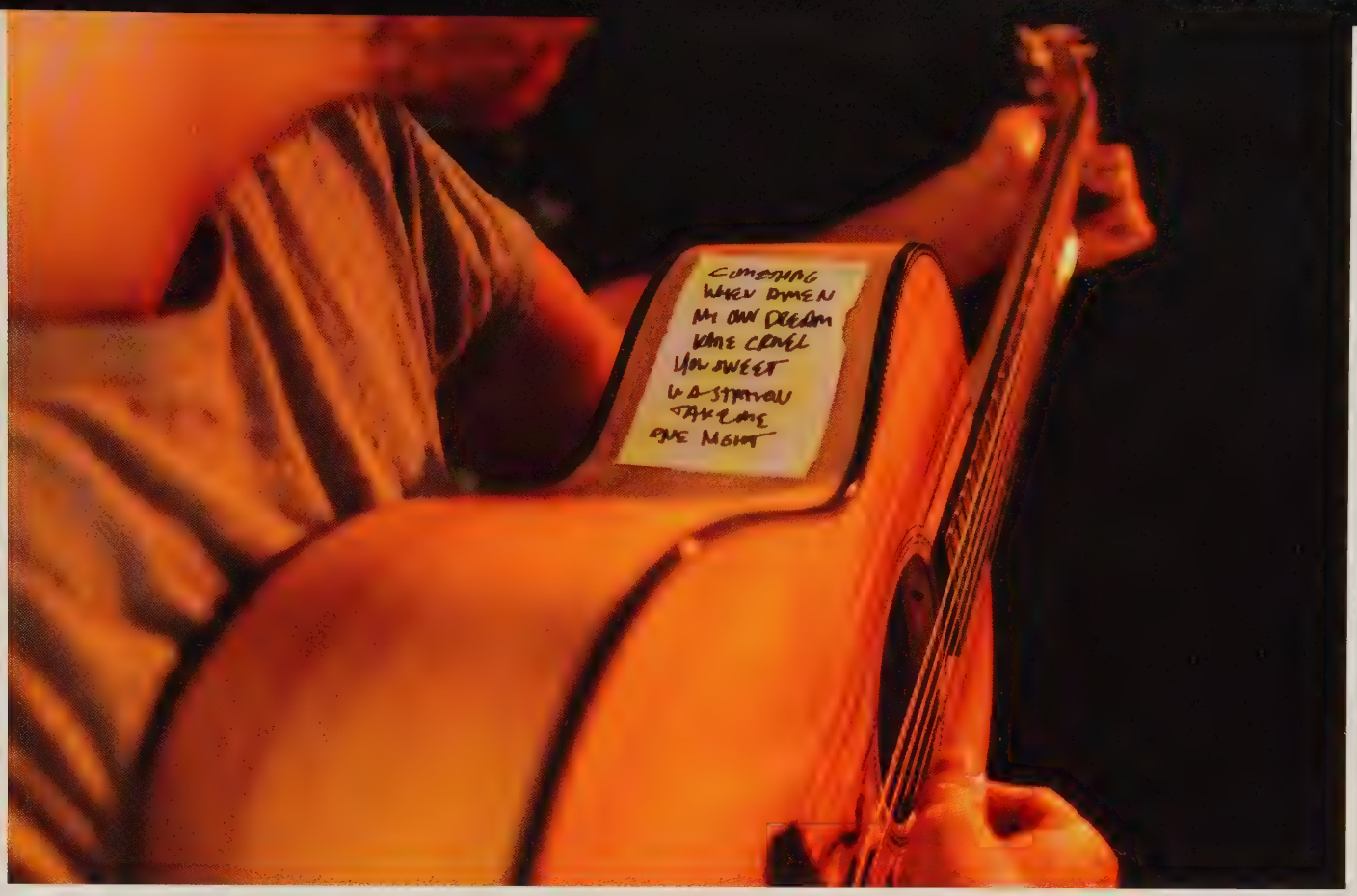

BUILDING A SET LIST

8 ways to create a song order that will keep you and your audience interested

BY RUTH PARRY

A set of music is typically about 12 songs, but it takes quite a bit of thought to choose the best songs and put them in the right order. A good set is not a grocery list. Nor should it just be a list of your current favorite tunes. When putting together a set list, you need to address your personal style and balance that with the needs of the person who hired you and the event itself. You also need to make sure you keep your audience interested. Generally, a good set begins with impact, ebbs in the middle, and ends in dramatic fashion. Along with this overall concept, there are ways to enhance your set, so you can present a satisfying performance, for you and your audience.

1 START WITH SOMETHING IN YOUR COMFORT ZONE

For the first song, play something you could theoretically play in your sleep. At the beginning of your performance, your adrenalin will be pumping, so choose a familiar song that reflects your style and gives you some psychological comfort. This is both a good way to calm the jitters and provide a good warm-up for your fingers and joints that isn't overly taxing. It's important to include a variety of song styles and moods in your set, but it's better if your first song is not a slow, sad ballad. Start with something upbeat or medium tempo to give the audience a positive first impression.

2 KEEP THINGS VARIED

You can achieve this in different ways. For example, mix up your fast songs with slow ones. I once heard a friend's band experiment with playing only upbeat tunes for their set. Afterward, they realized not only that variety was necessary and that too much of one thing is simply too much, they were *tired*! Another way to add variety is to change styles. Follow a blues tune with a country or pop song, perhaps.

Of course, if you focus specifically on one style of music, you can change the feeling instead. For example, if you're strictly a blues musician, try following a blues song that has a feeling of anger or frustration with a blues that has a sense of humor or joy. Or mix instrumental tunes with songs that have lyrics. Remember that there are songs with different time signatures. A lot of tunes are in 4/4, but perhaps you know a song in 3/4 or 6/8. Mixing things up in this way also adds dimension and interest.

3 PICK THE RIGHT SONGS FOR THE OCCASION

Consider the event itself. Are you playing a wedding? Background music for an art show? A performance-focused concert? If you're uncertain about the expectations, ask whoever hired you. My band once performed at a house concert that began with a reception where we played background music, and after the dinner hour we played a set in a concert setting. The set lists for these two environments were very different, but both captured our sound and style.

4 GAUGE THE CROWD'S MOOD

You might sense the need to change course during a performance, depending on the mood of the crowd, so it's important to have a cache of extra songs to choose from and be flexible about your song order. Early in the evening, the crowd may seem more subdued, and you may choose to play relaxing, background music. As the evening continues, the crowd size may increase and a party atmosphere might start to emerge. Your song choices should change gears along with the audience. Some of this you can predict, given the nature of the event, but it's good to be prepared for any surprises.

5 HAVE SOME EXTRA SONGS HANDY

Another good reason to have a cache of additional tunes you can play is that you may be asked to play longer than you expected. It's important to know the logistics of the evening before you arrive, such as how many sets you're being asked to play and the start and end times of each one. But things don't always go according to plan. At one of my gigs, I was asked to play just one set, the last set, because there were two other performers before me. It's a good thing I arrived early, however, because the second act didn't show up and I ended up playing two sets.

6 WAIT TO PLAY NEW SONGS

If you decide to play a new song, place it later in the set rather than earlier. That way, you're warmed up and feeling good, ready to concentrate on new material. However, there have been times when I've performed a new song early in a set because there were fewer people and the atmosphere felt right. Some performers like to tell an audience when they're about to perform a new song, but this can make the audience focus more on the perfection of your execution, creating unnecessary stress. Be aware of the best times to test-drive a new song and when it's best to stick with the familiar.

7 BE FLEXIBLE

Your intuition and awareness should guide your song selections, even as you follow a written set list. You need to be able to adapt to the moment and be flexible in your approach. Having said that, don't get too far off track! You want to preserve the thought process behind your original set list and ensure it has a variety and mix of song styles and moods. Keep in mind that if you perform as a soloist, you have greater flexibility than if you perform in a band. Bands tend to stray from their set list only occasionally, whereas a soloist can be more free-flowing in choosing the right song for the moment. Think of your set list as a guide or map for setting the mood for the evening.

8 GO OUT WITH A BANG!

Save your best song for last, but also be ready for the possibility of an encore. I usually save my best two songs for last, playing them one after the other. The last song (or songs) should echo the initial impact of your first number but with much more drama. It's the end of the set, you're totally warmed up, so you should unleash a song that has a little flash and shows off what you do best. Some performers will choose a song everyone knows for their last song and encourage the audience to sing along or clap their hands. Finding that "exit tune" is important. It can be the most important song of the night, because it's what gives an audience its lasting impression of you and your music. S&S

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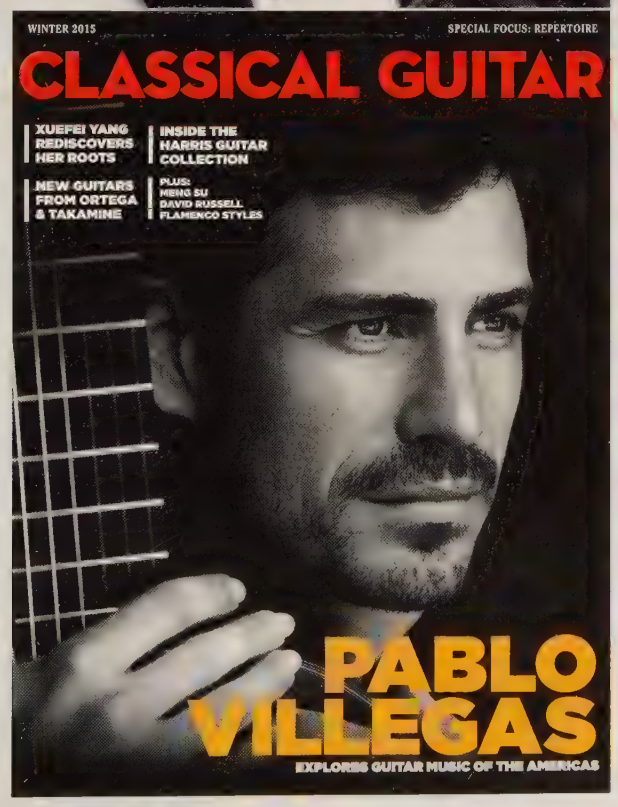

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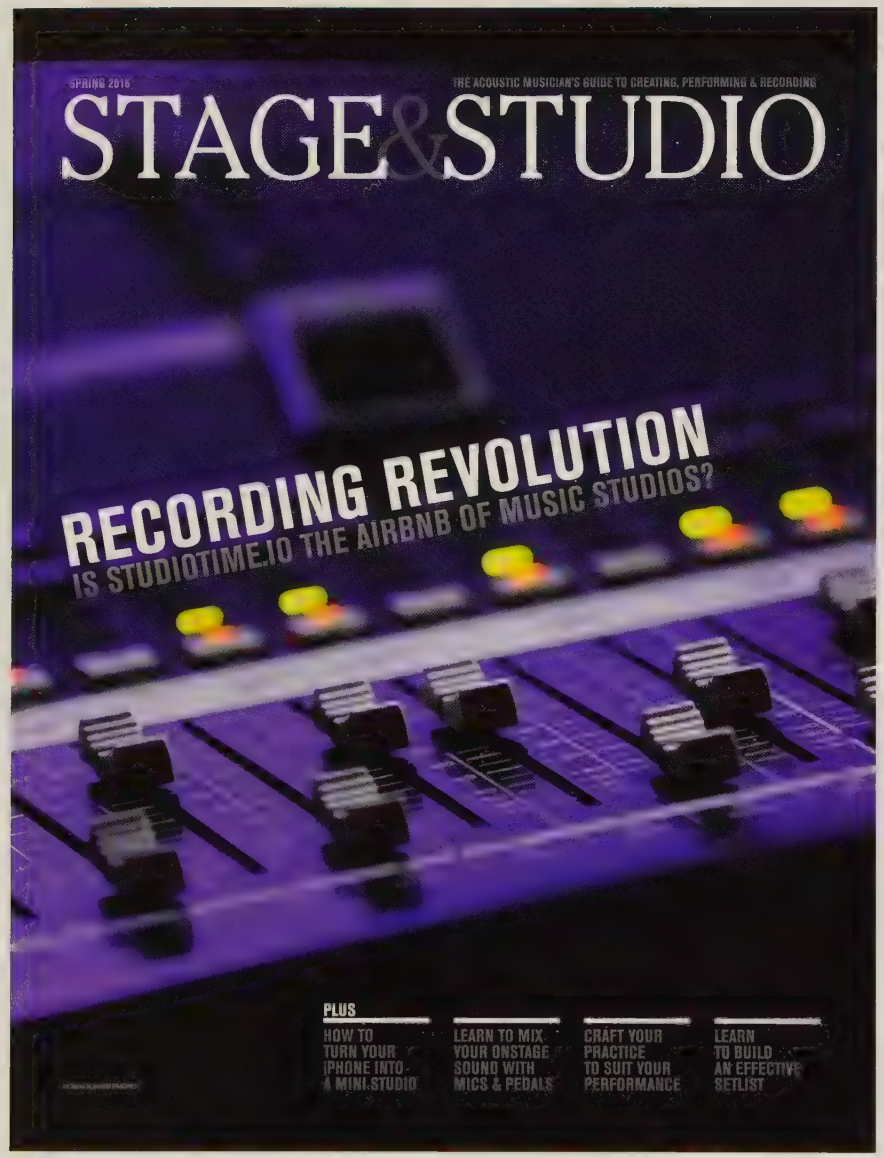

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JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTO

The Golden Road

EARNING A LIVING WITH THE CLASSICAL GUITAR

BY GRAHAM WADE

The delights of earning a living as a "professional musician" are like a siren call to many young people. What (they imagine) could be better than practicing the guitar all day (and possibly all night) in preparation for the inestimable rewards of being paid for performing the music they love?

It's a good question, a worthy question. Moreover, any young guitarist can easily observe that a lot of people are already doing just that—earning a living from the instrument. If they are doing that, what is to stop somebody else from also achieving that objective?

Traditionally, parents have often been warned against putting their children on the stage, whether as actors or musicians. The reason behind this is the renowned insecurity of both professions. Become a physician, an accountant, a lawyer, a banker, or a teacher in a school, etc., and one's income and security are sustained, after the early hurdles of placement and qualifications have been overcome, at least.

But a musician, by definition, is in a different category. Musicians are not paid daily for practicing but for their performances. The classical guitarist these days seems limited in the number of concerts available for soloists to perform. Moreover, the number of brilliant soloists has expanded over the last 20 years, whereas recital opportunities have, if anything, diminished.

Nevertheless, with hope in their hearts and faith in their musical abilities, every year dozens of classical guitar students in countries all over enroll at colleges for three- or four-year courses to study their beloved instrument in depth. They emerge at the end of the course with a degree or diploma, having passed the necessary examinations, both practical and theoretical.

Many now proceed to higher degrees—master's degree or doctorate—sometimes in performance studies, but more often to write a dissertation on some guitar-related subject. By this time, many of the students will have seen the writing on the wall or the light at the end of the tunnel.

It sometimes becomes apparent that financial salvation in terms of the classical guitar will only be attained for the majority by teaching the instrument—preferably in the context of a school or college—rather than performance. Such a post will pay a salary, health insurance, a pension, and provide a structure of possible promotion. Thus the great encompassing shell of education draws many capable musicians into a satisfying career.

Some graduates may opt to teach privately, preferring the apparent freedom of such an existence. This avenue presents its own problems, including hiring a studio, attracting students against existing competition, and the financial consideration that private teaching may well only extend to 30 weeks of the year, allowing for school holidays. Brilliant performers may prefer to chance their hand in this direction, as it leaves them free to pick up playing engagements without having to negotiate with an employer for time off.

Depending on local circumstances, some individuals enjoy what is often termed in the UK "reception work," playing freelance gigs in hotels, bars, restaurants, at weddings, and other occasions. This is often just "background" music, presenting a kind of aural backcloth, and not always quite the kind of playing that is ideal. But it can be lucrative, and one can acquire an agent or two who may offer you opportunities in this area of work.

One thing is certain, however: To make a living with the classical guitar, every individual must find his or her own pathway. Some may like to work in a music store, selling instruments and advising clients on what to buy.

Others may find great satisfaction in music technology, mastering the art of recording highly skilled guitarists—a marvelous profession, providing one has the necessary aptitude, expertise, and the equipment to go with it.

The key to earning a living through the classical guitar may well be summed up in one word: diversity. I look back over my 45 years in this business and find that at all times I have done several things at once. I have been fortunate to find employment with educational authorities and with a College of Music and high-grade students. But at the same time, I took private students, gave recitals—whether solo or ensemble (including trips to various countries including Canada, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Kuwait, etc.)—wrote articles for magazines and books, taught and lectured at summer schools and festivals, did occasional broadcasts, examining and adjudication on guitar juries. After I left full-time employment at a College of Music, I did 15 years of reception work, with several gigs a week, while pursuing my writing, lecturing, examining, and adjudicating, and teaching part-time at a university.

For young people wishing to enter the music profession—you must always be optimistic. If your heart is set on becoming a professional musician, you should go for it. Perhaps later you may find, for whatever reason, you prefer another career. All well and good. I know people who turned aside from full-time music after a few years to go into other walks of life. Good for them. They discovered not only what they would like to do, but also what they did not want to do!

However, I have many friends who have pursued the musical grail with consistent intensity over the decades. I find that people in the guitar profession, despite the occasional moan and groan about this or that, are fundamentally happy with their choice of occupation. They enjoy life to the fullest and retain their enthusiasm for the glories of the guitar. They are indeed the salt of the earth! **CG**

To make a living with the classical guitar, every individual must find his or her own pathway. The key may well be summed up in one word: diversity.

Obsession and Profession

FOR MOST GUITARISTS, IT ISN'T EASY PIECING TOGETHER A FULL-TIME CAREER IN MUSIC

BY BLAIR JACKSON

I'm going to go out on a limb and state that almost no one aspires to become a professional classical guitarist to get rich. That isn't to say that none become wealthy, but it's hardly ever the reason a guitarist chooses to devote thousands of hours of blood, sweat, and tears to such an incredibly difficult and demanding undertaking. For most, the rewards are mainly intangible, derived from the satisfaction of learning and mastering a beautiful and complex art form, the deep spiritual nourishment and sheer bliss that both playing and listening to great music regularly provide, and feeling the tremendous support and connectedness that runs deep in the classical guitar community.

"Getting rich" and "making a living" are two different things. For the purposes of this piece, I'm going to discard the first and focus instead on the second, which is something that thousands of classical guitarists around the world are doing—in most cases by cobbling together a career from numerous music-related paths: performing, recording, teaching, writing and publishing new music, promoting concerts.

There are all sorts of avenues today's guitarists can and do take. It's a little bit of money here, a little bit there, and with any luck (actually, a lot of hard work and creativity), it adds up to enough of an income to keep the wolf away from the door and to banish thoughts of having to find work outside of music. Of course, one person's definition of "making a living" can vary considerably from another's—there's "happy to just be scraping by" vs. "contentedly comfortable," and many shadings and variations therein—whatever the case, if playing the guitar is your profession, congratulations! That's a real accomplishment.

Being the curious type, I've wondered about the varied income streams that classical guitarists are tapping into, and I thought it might be interesting—and perhaps instructive to guitarists still hoping to make the leap from passionate hobbyist to full-time professional—to look more closely at some of these areas. So, I approached some players at different levels of achievement, concert promoters, and teachers, and asked them to reveal details of how they earn their living, and the finances of the guitar world in general. By e-mail, I asked the same questions of each respondent and they answered the ones that were relevant to them. In exchange for their candor, I promised to reveal no names or specific organizations; this is not about who makes what, and how. This is not an exposé; rather it is designed to present some collective wisdom about the state of the profession.

Keep in mind that this is a small sample size and there will be many exceptions and variances from every generalized and specific figure you read below. None of this is set in stone. What a guitar festival in an American city pays might be quite different from what a small local church in North England might pay the same artist for a one-nighter.

CONCERTS

Not surprisingly, the fees that guitarists earn from performing in concerts vary wildly and depend on many factors, including the fame/reputation of the player, the venue and/or event (Festival? Guitar-society offering? Solo? With orchestra?), expenses expected to be covered, number of other acts sharing the ticket income, whether a foundation or other philanthropic body is involved, etc.

Q. What is the range of fees a guitarist can expect for playing a concert?

One person who has been intimately involved in British concert production noted, "If the guitarist is unknown, then he or she can expect not much more than $200, plus some expenses. If he is an established player, he can expect $750, which is typical at an international classical guitar festival. If the player is world-class, then the fee could be up to $2,000, $3,000, or more. A top quartet may earn as much as $5,000 or more.

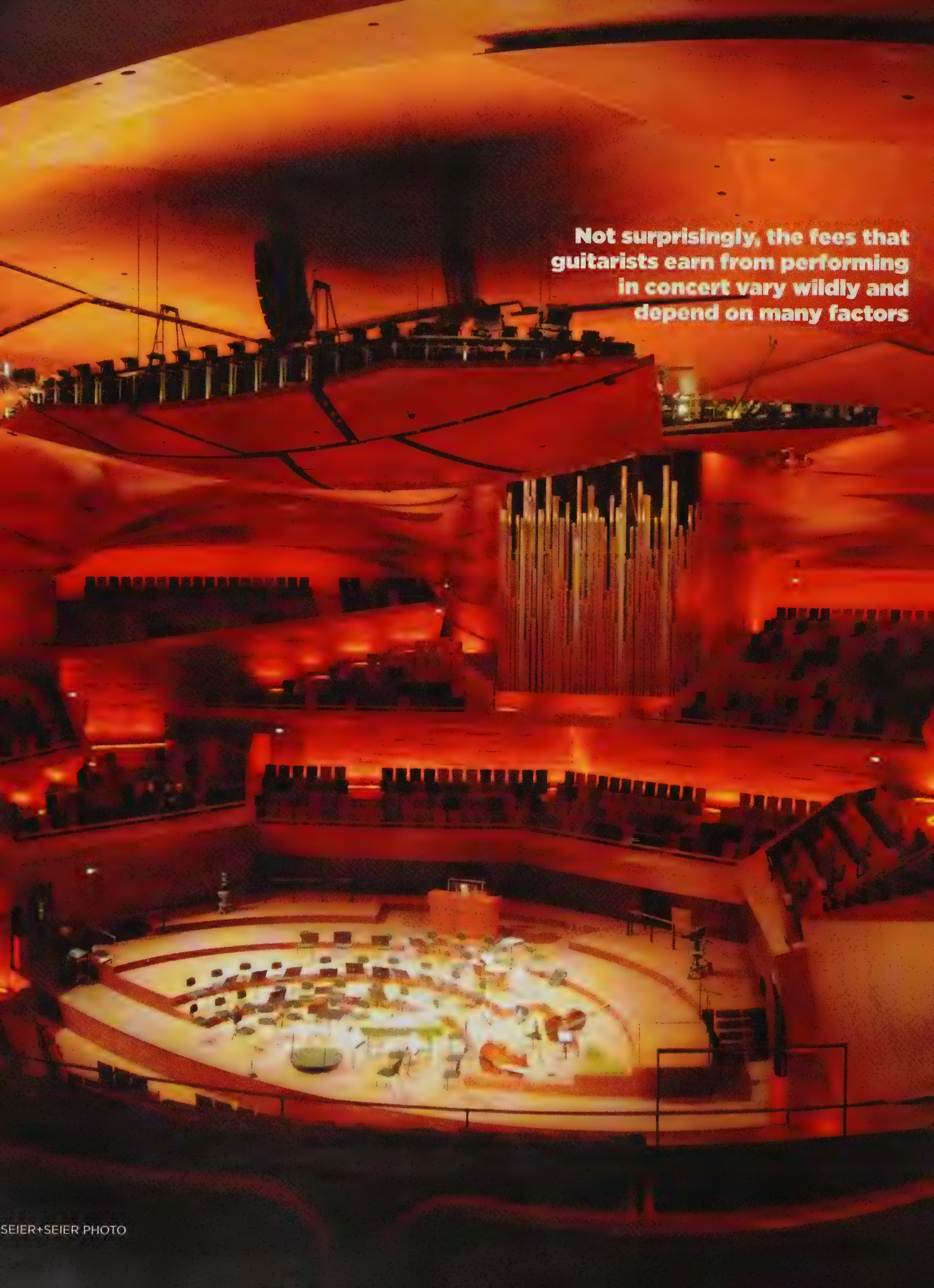
A US-based concert producer answered, "$1,000 to $10,000. A rare player will go over that, if they can sell tickets. John Williams used to get $20,000 or more, but those days seem to be gone."

A top international guitarist wrote that he is paid $10,000 for two concerts at a venue, $5,000 for a solo recital, $2,500 for a chamber music concert, and $2,500 for a classical guitar society recital.

A less well-known (but still international) artist added, "For solo recitals I get $950 to $2,500 depending on how long the recital is. If I play with an orchestra I earn around $4,000."

A third guitarist, who occasionally plays in a duo, said he and his playing partner recently split a fee of $8,000 for a fairly high-profile concert in a nice US venue. The same guitarist mentioned that festivals vary greatly, with one in New York paying $1,500 for a concert and another in Germany topping out at $3,000, even for big names. "The thinking is you need to string together a bunch of festivals in Europe and make it that way," he said.

JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTO



Not surprisingly, the fees that guitarists earn from performing in concert vary wildly and depend on many factors

SEIER+SEIER PHOTO

Another view: "I don't play concerts generally as a classical guitarist, but as co-runner of a classical guitar club, I can put my own view on booking a guitarist here. Because there are a lot of small societies in the UK that are run on a shoestring, when we book a guitarist we are unhappy to pay more than £200 [nearly $300] for a whole evening, and prefer to give them a percentage of the door takings, with a smaller minimum, say £120 [$180], just in case people don't turn up. I would imagine that, unless there are some seriously rich guitar societies here, many others would do the same."

One more comment: "It is important to mention the enormous help given to guitarists by music companies such as D'Addario, Savarez, and La Bella. Their generous support for festivals, competitions, and concerts has been, and is, vital for many young guitarists. The D'Addario Foundation, in particular, stands out in its phenomenal support of events all over the world. Its own New York City concert program for new young guitarists over the years has also helped many onto the ladder of success."

Q. How are expenses dealt with, from travel to food to lodging?

Former promoter: "If it is a one-off appearance at, say, a festival, then the artist's travel costs, plus food and lodging, are usually covered by the organizers. In the case of small guitar societies, the artist often stays with one of the organizers to minimize costs. The agreed-upon fee will usually include an amount for travel."

Top guitarist: "Usually presenters pay for your flight in economy class. A round-trip flight ticket from America to Europe averages around $800 to $1000. There are some countries and managers that negotiate an all-inclusive fee where you have to deduct your flight expenses from your fee, and then the manager will get his percentage from the whole fee as well."

US producer/promoter: "It depends on the deal and the artist's leverage. With popular acoustic players, a per diem and lodging are usually expected. Classical players tend to try and get housing included."

Another guitarist: "Some guitarists, if they're higher level, ask for airfare in the fee, but for many there is no airfare or room and board; you're on your own to work that out."

A third guitarist: "Sometimes promoters don't have the money to pay for international travel, and in that case I depend on foundation money or other sponsors."

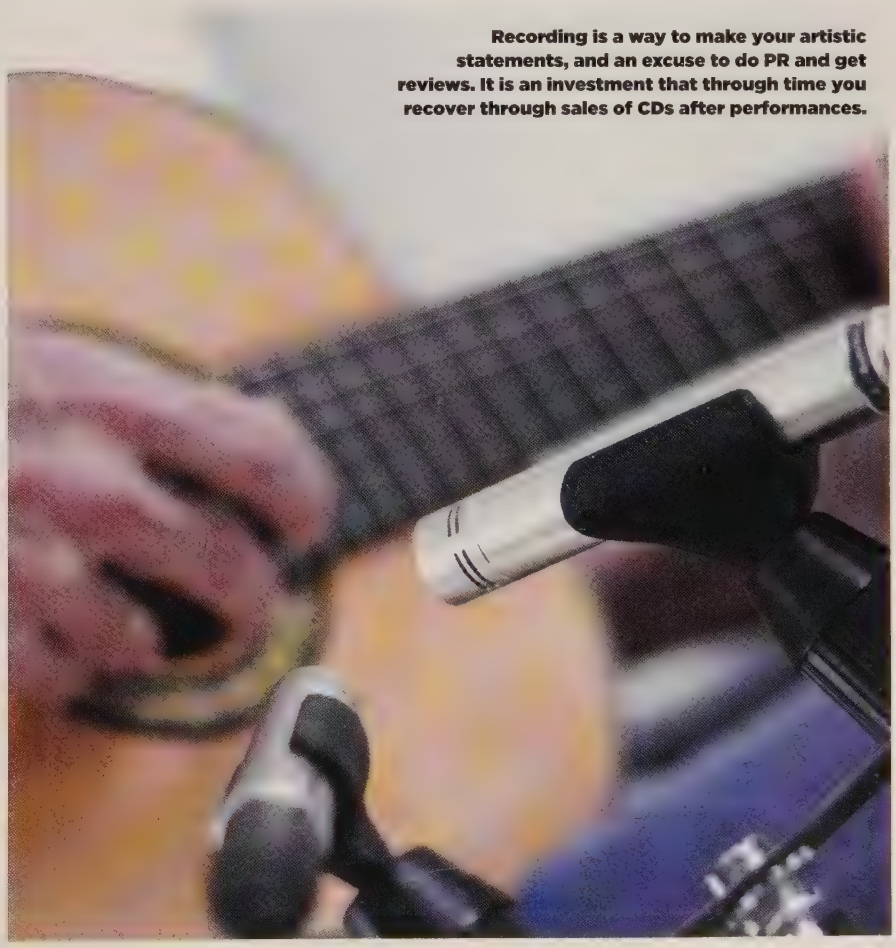
Q: How does the addition of a master class affect an artist's fee?

Here, the range mentioned by the respondents stretched from about $200 to $600, usually added on top of the performance fee, but sometimes included in the lump-sum payment. The very top tier players can ask for more.

RECORDING AND CDS

Q: Does anyone make money off CDs anymore?

As most of you know, the recording industry is not what it was 20 years ago, before the current generation of music consumers stopped buying CDs, because they could find all the music they wanted online, in many cases, for free. The days when Andrés Segovia, Julian Bream, Christopher Parkening, John Williams, and a couple of others could sell close to 100,000 copies of an album are long gone. Today, the top strata of players can still earn decent money from album sales—either CDs or digital downloads—but, as in pop music, too, the numbers aren't what they once were. Today, selling 10,000 classical-guitar albums



Recording is a way to make your artistic statements, and an excuse to do PR and get reviews. It is an investment that through time you recover through sales of CDs after performances.

is considered strong (the same is true for jazz recordings), but most classical guitar CDs sell considerably fewer; many never break 1,000 copies and don't earn back the investment in recording.

While there are still prestigious record labels that put out guitar music, advances to the artists tend to be small—if they're offered at all. Indeed, some artists on major classical labels find themselves paying out of pocket in advance for recording expenses (rather than the "old school" practice of the label paying for the recording and then sales of the finished CD chipping away at the artist's debt to the record company). For some artists, it's worth it to work this way because they at least reap the benefit of having the label's promotion and distribution arms behind them to (hopefully) get the album out to the public. Increasingly, though, musicians of every genre are opting to make and sell their albums independently as a way to keep expenses down and to have unlimited access to "product" to sell at concerts.

So why go through the trouble of recording at all? Well, an album is a calling-card of sorts. It shows an artist's skill and style and demonstrates the sort of repertoire that he or she likes to perform. Some guitar music gets played on classical radio stations, which is good exposure, and selling CDs at concerts can be lucrative over the long haul. CDs are also the way that younger musicians get their music into the hands of concert promoters, so that can have an impact on bookings. That's one reason why so many debut albums by classical guitarists are like hour-long, mixed-repertoire recitals: "Here's what I can do!"

Of our respondents, one of whom records for a major classical label, said he had paid $12,000 to make his most recent recording. "Then, I pay $9 for each CD I buy from them to sell in concerts for $20, from which the venue usually takes 15 to 20 percent of the sales. Making a CD is an investment that through time you recover through the sales of CDs after performances; there is basically no profit in them. Recording is a way to make your artistic statements, and an excuse to do PR and get reviews."

Another noted, "I didn't receive an advance to make my CD and it cost a lot. Recording, mixing, mastering, designing the booklet, translations to other languages in the booklet, photos, etc. all add up. And also, the record company must have its share: I get my copies to sell from the record company. When I started making the CD, it was not with the intention of earning a lot of money. I just wanted to have a product to represent classical guitar music and myself. That, I think, is very important to have. One does not have to have a record company to do that, of course, but I wanted to do it as professionally and perfect as I could. But people who make the CDs themselves earn more money, because it is much cheaper."

A last word on this issue: Many artists are excited when they learn that their CDs have been added to streaming services such as Spotify or Apple Music. It is, potentially, great exposure.

But the reality is that no one—not Beyoncé, not the Rolling Stones, much less Julian Bream—is making more than a pittance from having their music streamed online. If anything, having access to entire albums online gives consumers a reason *not* to buy the CD, because there it is, essentially for free.

MUSIC PUBLISHING

Q: What about publishing? Do "name" composers sign contracts that give them advances against royalties? How are they paid, in terms of a percentage of the retail price of sheet music?

"In my experience," wrote one classical guitar insider, "many guitar composers have a basic agreement with a publisher, with perhaps a small advance royalty payment. Then they will usually receive 10 percent of the retail value of their music sold. However, like CDs, total sales of many published works are very small. The income from their compositions is enhanced when they are played on a recording. If a major artist, such as John Williams, includes a given piece on one of his records, then the composer could enjoy a respectable royalty."

A guitarist/composer adds, "Unless you sell lots of books [pieces], you only make an occasional, smallish amount. My best-selling publication has, over the years, sold a few hundred copies. As I usually get 10 percent of the book price (about £15), I get £1.50 a time, so through the years I have probably made a few hundred pounds in total. My other original works with [various large and small publishers] have sold only a small handful each (same percentages); I bet I have only made £100 in total over all those. One company sent me an Italian contract, which I didn't read properly, for one of my pieces—I found out after that I get nothing for sheet music sales, but only get royalties if it is ever recorded or used in a film or TV program. So unless you are a Roland Dyens, or another large seller of music, you make a paltry amount from publishing your pieces—when you can actually get publishers to accept your pieces at all, which is another tale entirely!

"Royalties for pieces in the UK are paid either because they are played in a concert venue covered by PRS [the Performing Right Society; now called PRS for Music; the US equivalents are ASCAP and BMI], played over the radio or TV, recorded on a CD, or used in TV or film. Well, the first category of playing pieces in venues is very hit-or-miss. Because many guitar recitals are in churches, or different sorts of clubs, they either don't pay out at all, as they are not on the list of venues covered by PRS, or they are paltry sums, namely a few pounds a time, (depending on the size of the piece and number of listeners at the venue). If, however, you get your 20-minute piece played at the Royal Albert Hall, with 3,000 people watching, it's a very different story. But get your five-minute piece played by a top artist, playing at a local club with 100 people in the audience, and it might get absolutely nothing. And many guitarists play at such venues all the time, so the writer gets zip from those sorts of gigs.

"Having had a piece of mine played by a duo recorded for radio, and broadcast once over commercial radio, I can vouch that that pays much better. The same piece (about 15 minutes long) at a small venue, might pay £10–£15. Over the radio? £150 each time.

A small publisher: "Whenever I sign up anyone to publish their music, they never get an advance. Payments are paid out at the year's end and they are usually 10 percent of the total music sales, and 50 percent of any monies received from recordings, broadcasts, etc."

A final thought: "Performance royal-

ties seem more lucrative [than from sales of sheet music]. The best thing is to get a piece into a movie score. I'm still getting royalties from a piece played on the soundtrack of a film maybe 15 years ago. They come in from all over the world via ASCAP. I'm not the composer but own the publishing rights."

There are quite a few classical guitarists who play for weddings and a number of good books of suitable 'wedding' music arranged for classical guitar

TEACHING

While there are certainly a number of classical guitarists who make most of their income from a combination of performing at concerts and selling CDs, the great majority of professionals earn some—and in many cases, most—of their living through teaching, either by having a steady position at an elementary or high school, college or conservatory, or offering private lessons, or both. The list of guitarists past and present who have taught at colleges large and small would include *most* of the successful players you know. Landing a position offers a steady paycheck, schedule flexibility that usually allows for touring in summer (and at other times), and also is critically important in educating the great guitarists of tomorrow. Salaries differ greatly depending on myriad factors, so it's very difficult to generalize. And the requirements of different positions also vary greatly—sometimes, particularly with young guitarists, teaching involves large groups (which is not easy); others teach to just a few students at a time over the course of a school term. Private teaching is another animal altogether.

"Being the head of a guitar department is certainly today one of the surest ways for a guitarist to guarantee an acceptable and regular level of income," wrote one respondent. "Fortunately, today there are many excellent guitar departments throughout the world. This was not the case in the 1970s. And such positions are often very prestigious."

How does one compete for such a post? "Better have a doctorate and be a competition winner with some recordings and tours under your belt," wrote another.

As for private, one-on-one teaching, it seems to depend on the fame of the guitarist, where the teacher is located (Big city? Small village?), and the amount of interest in classical guitar in the region. In other words, the range is wide, running anywhere from about $45 an hour on the low end, up to as much as $225 for a top-flight player (or well-known teacher).

OTHER INCOME SOURCES

One of the responding guitarists has managed to land a sponsorship deal with a company he likes that pays for some PR and marketing for his concerts in exchange for having signage and their product onhand at the concerts, as well as at receptions after concerts, private recitals, etc. As he said, "I offer them my image, and they 'come' with me on tour."

A veteran observer mentioned, "I know quite a few classical guitarists who play for weddings. There are a number of good books of suitable 'wedding' music arranged for classical guitar. Others play in hotel bars and lounges—the Great American Songbook arranged for classical guitar. Others will play a selection of South American music in similar venues. I also have known a few guitarists who have written music for advertising played on radio, television, and movies. In addition, they may appear on a program as an extra playing in the background."

Then there's this one: "I seem to be a rarity, because I find it easy to listen to a guitar piece, and then know exactly where it goes on the guitar, and duly write it down, as I have with hundreds of pieces over the years. The best thing about that is the reputation it gets you, as so many people who can play me into the ground cannot do what I do at all. But I cannot charge by the hour, because an average four-minute piece might take me a total of 15 to 20 hours over a period of weeks. But I can only charge $25 to $40 *per piece*—not 20 hours at $28 an hour, which is my teaching rate. That would work out to $560 for a four-minute piece, and no one is going to pay that! But it has earned me a reputation for doing it, so that is worth more in my opinion."

Finally, from a guitarist/concert producer: "I bought a cottage on the beach, my wife planted a beautiful garden, people started asking us if they could get married at our place, and we now have 80 to 100 weddings (ceremony only!) at our home each year. Guess who plays the guitar at every wedding?"

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Everyone has a different story about how they make ends meet as a classical guitarist, or how they plan to in the future.

Tell us about your experiences—good and bad—and perhaps it can be part of a future addendum to this article. (editors.cg@stringletter.com) **CG**

Man on Wires

A GLIMPSE OF THE TOURING LIFE WITH CIRQUE DU SOLEIL AND CAVALIA

BY ANTOINE BERTHIAUME

inean acrobats
a tranquil moment
m 'Odyssea'

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAVALIA

Four years ago, a friend of mine got a gig as bandleader on a show called *Odysseo*, an equestrian circus by Cavalia. He was looking for a guitarist who could play classical guitar, acoustics, and who had a background in improvisation. There would be a four-month period of creation followed by a North American tour. The pay wasn't great, to be honest, but it wasn't bad either. Mainly, it meant I would get a chance to get a steady paycheck without hustling for gigs. But it would also mean breaking ties with the local music scene in Montreal, where I was deeply rooted. Life on the road keeps you away from your family, friends, and from the circle of musicians closest to you. Tough decision, but I eventually signed a two-year contract. The timing seemed right, allowing me to reflect on my career while putting some money in the bank.

I am a guitarist, but consider myself more of a composer thanks to the advice of a wise teacher who once told me I *had* to study composition even though I really just wanted to be a player. I am still studying music today: I undertook a doctorate in Composition and Sound Creation at the University of Montreal.

My musical education goes back even further. I first started in a college jazz program where I pursued both classical and electric guitar. Then a few grants from the arts councils of Quebec and Canada (we Canadians are lucky enough to have those) allowed me to study and play with masters in New York, San Francisco, Toronto, and London (Mordy Ferber, William Beauvais, Derek Bailey, Elliot Sharp, and Charlie Banacos, to name a few). Settling back home in Montreal, I carved my niche as a guitarist and composer in the avant-garde and jazz scene, while getting by with day jobs and pursuing a master's in Contemporary Composition.

One might think that engaging in so many genres of music for over 15 years would prevent you from achieving success at any particular one. In my case, however, the amalgam—being versatile at everything, but not an expert in anything—made me into something singular.

BEING YOURSELF VS. BEING SOMEBODY ELSE

Jazz musicians spend a lot of time transcribing other people's music. Learning John Coltrane's phrasing on one of Miles Davis' ballads, studying Kurt Rosenwinkel's harmonic textures, learning to swing like Elvin Jones—all of these processes may enrich your vocabulary. Of course, you run the risk of losing yourself when impersonating others.

It was always essential for me to stay true to what I really wanted to do, which was to play my own music as well as participate in other projects that appealed to me. I did put out records in Montreal, Japan, England, and the United States, but even with the many tours I went on, I always struggled to make a living as a self-employed guitarist (as most of us do in the 21st century). After years of toiling in the music scene, I realized it was time for me to take a break—to make a living as a guitarist. Wait, what?

On *Odysseo*, the composer was a guitarist. This, for me, was a poisoned chalice. Sure, it was refreshing to play for someone who knew the instrument in all its subtleties—a rarity, since many composers struggle to write for the guitar—but I was put in a situation where I had to mimic the composer, the guitarist, and the person. I even had to play his guitars!

Having to get into his hands and mind to replicate his every movement made me understand the difference between being hired for what you do, and being hired to execute. One requires you to be original; the other demands you do as you are told. After suffering for quite a while, I eventually accepted my fate, only to discover I was actually learning a lot. Letting go of your ego to impersonate somebody else is a great lesson in humility, and I realized that other people's approaches to my instrument were not only just as valid as mine, but once mastered provided me with new skills.

After touring with Cavalia's *Odysseo* for almost two years I scored a gig (and a substantial pay raise) with the Cirque du Soleil show *Kurios*. It was great to be part of a new creation: learning to work with the composers (pianists and a drummer, a welcome change), recording the album, and seeing the birth of a show that would be performed for 15 years. I had much more freedom during creation, having to arrange most of my parts and find my way through the music.

Both *Odysseo* and *Kurios* had bass players leading the band, calling the shots, and triggering some pre-recorded music on Ableton Live sequencers. Because we were all following the same click track, it was easy for us to turn on a dime and deal with the unpredictability of acrobatic numbers. And because 70 horses were not always equally in the mood to spark joy onstage, the length of any performance could be stretched on *Odysseo*. Fortunately, having the music scored in a jazz-composition fashion allowed us to shuffle and repeat any section. The drummer, as is usual in the circus world, was in charge of most of the cues and visual punches linked to the action onstage. My role was then to be able to improvise at any given moment over a well-orchestrated score influenced by Spanish, African, and Arabic styles of music—without seeming too idiomatic. On the other hand, *Kurios* was composed in a linear orchestral way, resting on more predictable acts performed by some of the best acrobats on earth. Solo sections were then well-defined and structured in an electro-swing score, also meaning more stability in the way we had to perform.

Both shows featured violin, drums, bass, guitars, and a female singer. On *Kurios* we also had a percussion player, an accordion player, and a cellist who was equally skilled on piano. Playing with talented musicians is a major asset, giving you the chance to bring the music to another level. Cavalia being a small company, musicians were hired through word of mouth, while Cirque du Soleil has its own well-oiled casting machine that hires great talents from all around the world. It is then the role of the composers and of the bandleader to get the most out of every musician and balance the score to give every member of the group a chance to shine. Because the show will be repeated at least 500 to 700 times in a two-year contract (on top of the many rehearsal hours), it is crucial to make everybody happy. You do this by respecting all individuals and allowing them to deploy their abilities.

LIFE ON THE ROAD

Touring is hard on the body. If you maintain a healthy balance you can make it right, but it's easy to fall into a routine where you wake up late and just waste the rest of the day idly before going to work. On a typical week, you play nine to ten shows and are exhausted by Sunday night. But as a musician there's always the mentality that "you can't complain if you are working." This is true to a certain extent, but you have to be careful to get the right amount of sleep and manage the lures of the touring life (there's always a party to go to somewhere).

A certain dose of discipline goes a long way: you'd be amazed how much you can

do in a week. On a nine-show week, I'd get Monday off, Tuesday to Thursday would be one-show days, and then the rest of the week were two-show days. Musicians are usually on show-call at 6:30 PM on a one-show day, which leaves a lot of time in the schedule for practicing, jogging, composing, and doing all the things you want to do for yourself.

While in Mexico, I came up with the idea of a composition marathon in which I challenged myself to write and learn 30 songs in 30 days. I had to be able to compose the song, play it, and post it online on the same day. I ended up doing about 20, but still found myself in the best shape ever after the project. It's all about keeping busy and active, while retaining a certain energy level to be able to perform every night.

I'd stay in one city for six to seven weeks without getting a week off when doing a big-top show. Then I could either go home or follow to the next city.

When playing arenas, it's a totally different story: you spend a lot more time traveling, since you are changing cities all the time.

INVENT YOUR OWN JOB

A lot of people think it's crazy to quit a job playing music that gives you close to a six-figure salary and offers everything you need: travel, food, lodging, and a gig every night.

But it's easy to fall into a pattern where you feel content just playing the shows, knowing that you are making a good living. You risk losing yourself in boredom or mental exhaustion. Performing nearly 400 identical shows a year takes its toll. It's not exactly assembly-line work in a gray factory, but the repetitive side of it may lull you into something you do not want to be.

I believe the best way to sustain the touring lifestyle for many years is to have your family go with you (though family accommodations are not what they used to be), find happiness in knowing that you

CLASSICAL VS. ACOUSTICS

As classical guitarists, we tend to look down on those steel-string axes as lesser instruments. We often are quite wrong in the end (I actually spent a fortune on a Beauregard guitar which, I adore). Strumming is an art in itself. An acoustic guitar requires lots of exploration before it lets you call it your own. On *Odysseo*, I played a classical and three acoustics with alternate tunings. Doing so I discovered a whole new world of possibilities, which eventually influenced the way I now play and understand the guitar.

Using acoustics can come in handy, as they are easy to integrate in an amplified group, while a classical guitar requires a lot of magic tricks to get your sound "right." You will never come close to a perfect sound, but you may reach a certain quality that is far from bad if you persevere and do some research. The "right" amplified sound is a sound you will be comfortable playing. You will never be as inspired sonically and technically as you are when playing in a room by yourself or in a solo concert situation in a chamber music venue. All in all, I prefer to see the amplified classical guitar as an entirely different instrument—the response just isn't the same.

You have to accept situations for what they are. Between your fingertips and your eardrums is a guitar, a piezo pickup, a compressor, a filter equalizer, a wire, a soundboard console with more EQs, reverb, more wires, and a pair of in-ear monitors. You are not simply playing guitar, you are dealing with a chain reaction in which every decision and component affects the way you play and how the audience perceives you. Therefore, having a great relationship with your monitor soundman is crucial. He or she is the person in control of what you hear. A good mix, in which everything is at the right level and well-panned, often defines the relationship among you, the music, and your colleagues.

Many musicians make the mistake of having too much of themselves in their mix ("More me, please!"). I try to have *less* guitar in my mix than I would when unplugged. It's the best way to stay alert, hear everything, and be confident in my playing. Keep too much of yourself in the mix and you might get self-conscious, or believe that you are playing too loud. (Hint: You never are unless somebody complains.) You then risk playing too softly and not sending enough signal to the sound engineer.

Piezos don't have to be your enemies, merely a necessary evil. A better signal-to-noise ratio for a thinner sound is an obvious trade-off. On *Odysseo*, I played Godin classical guitars—they actually have great pickups—and a Yamaha suited with its own built-in piezo. My signal was split into two outputs so I could control my effects with Ableton Live and send a dry signal directly to the mixing board. With *Kurios*, I had the chance to play my own instrument crafted by Bruno Boutin—it had a K&K pickup, which I processed through a Tonebone Pre-Z, giving me more body and EQ options. This is still my favorite setup today. In a small venue, I usually try to blend 80 percent piezo and 20 percent microphone to get a little more texture. Piezos give you precision; microphones give you life.

are bringing joy to people, keep learning new things that feed your artistic instinct, and allow yourself to play differently every night—even if it means not always giving a flawless performance.

Failure will bring new ideas and help keep you on your toes.

For me, the two-year stints I did with each of these productions were perfect. I'm happy settling back in Montreal now, a place where I can be myself in projects that suit me, with people who embrace the experience I have gotten on the road. You are your own little business, and traveling the globe lets you know there is a market for you. **CG**

Antoine Berthiaume and his current Bruno Boutin guitar

JULIE ARTACHO PHOTO

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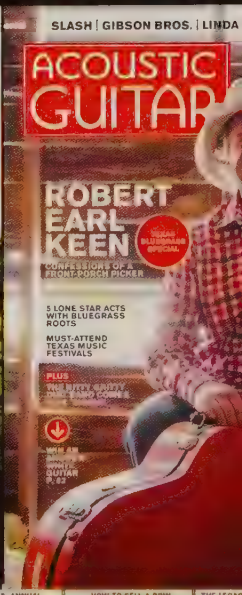

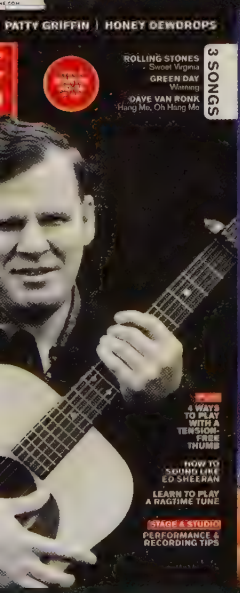

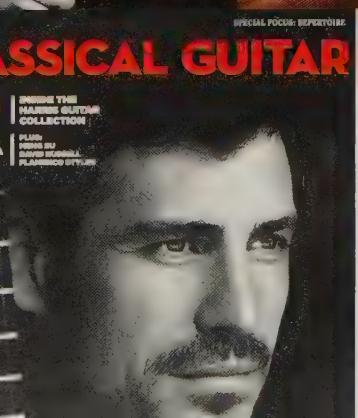

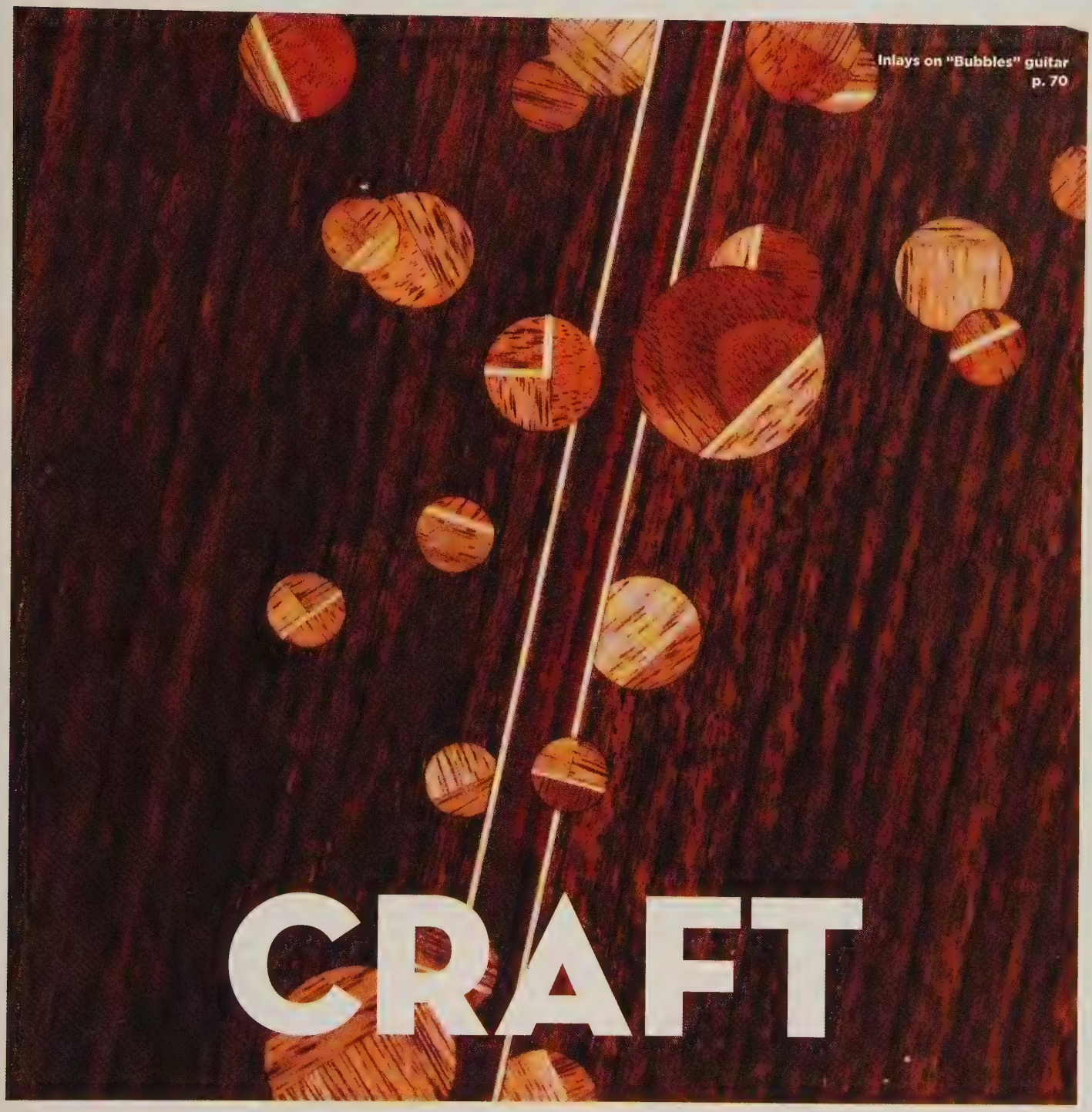

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JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTO

Maria Conde and assistant in the Felipe Conde Workshop

GUITARREROS DE MADRID

A personal tour of some guitar shops in the Spanish capital

Story and Photos by John W. Warren

On a trip to Madrid last August, I decided to visit a few of the city's luthiers and guitar shops. It was not the best month to visit—a majority of the residents flee the city's oppressive heat for the beach or trips abroad, and many small shops close for the month. The upside is that in August, Madrid's streets, cafés, and bars remain relatively deserted.

The classical guitar's early development happened as much in Italy as Spain, and today superb classical and flamenco guitars are made in every corner of the world, yet no other country's socio-cultural relationship to an instrument is as close as Spain's is to the guitar. And Madrid has been the heart of Spanish guitar-making since the mid-18th century.

While my wife, Yolanda, who was born and raised in Madrid, sipped a *cortado* (espresso with a bit of warm milk) with friends in a chic apartment overlooking the Plaza Tirso de Molina, I escaped for a few minutes to visit the Guitarras Ramírez shop on Calle de la Paz. The *taller*, or workshop, was closed for the month, but the downtown shop was open.

The Ramírez guitar dynasty was founded by José I. Ramírez, who in 1870, after completing an apprenticeship in the guitar workshop of Francisco Gonzalez (1830–1880), established his own shop and began training other luthiers. Manuel Ramírez, José's brother, joined the *taller* but eventually split to open a competing shop. Manuel's fame spread through Francisco Tárrega, but his fate changed one day when a young guitarist entered the shop and asked to "borrow" a guitar. Manuel listened to the young Andrés Segovia play a basic guitar, but after hearing a few lines, pressed his finest instrument into the guitarst's hands. Segovia played the guitar in concert and recorded with it from 1912 to 1937, until, to Ramírez' dismay, he asked the German luthier Herman Hauser to copy and modify the instrument. The original 1912 guitar is now in the collection of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Other notable players who have performed on Ramírez guitars include: Christopher Parkening, Maurizio Colonna, Sting, Lee Ritenour, and others. José Ramírez IV and his sister Amalia now run the *taller*. Amalia, one of the first eminent female luthiers in Spain, has done much to revive old designs while bringing modern techniques into the line. Some of the two siblings' children are apprenticing in the workshop, continuing the Ramírez tradition.

Inside the shop, I tried to avoid damaging the guitars with the sweat that was streaming off my brow. Madrid's summer had been one heat wave after another, and though it had cooled off, it was still sunny and 94 degrees outside. The city's luthiers and guitar shops can sometimes be a bit stuffy and off-putting to customers, but the staffer here welcomed me with at least a neutral, "¿En qué le puedo server?" (How can I help?).

I asked to play a few guitars and he asked what kind I was looking for, a reasonable question to which I didn't have a good answer. I told him I was looking for a professional, handmade classical guitar that didn't cost a small fortune or require a home-equity mortgage on my house—my three children are approaching college age. These requirements may be mutually exclusive.

My life-long guitar, the instrument I learned on, performed on, and traveled with for 40 years, is a good student model, designed by the celebrated Southern California-based luthier José Oribe and handmade in Japan. But in 2015, I rekindled my dedication to regular practice, performing, and composing, setting my sights on recording my first CD, so I'd been contemplating the

purchase of a higher-caliber instrument.

The Ramírez clerk handed me the "130 Años," a studio (or student) model commemorating the dynasty's 130th anniversary. Made elsewhere but "supervised" by the Ramírez workshop—and priced around €2,000—the guitar's tone and playability were no better than my current guitar. He next handed me a new model—the "Classical Conservatorio"—that he described as "minimalist." Built with a simpler construction by craftsmen in the Guitarras Ramírez workshop, it was designed to offer a luthier-quality instrument at a reasonable price by stripping out some of the "non-essential" components. Quite elegant, if unusual-looking; "minimalist" is an apt description. It featured a bright red cedar top (it's also available in spruce), Indian rosewood back and sides, an ebony fingerboard, and cedar neck. It had a nice tone and projected well. I wouldn't classify it as a bargain at €4,500, but it is less expensive than the higher-end Ramírez models. Finally, the "Auditorio" model, with its modern "double-top" soundboard design, provided a powerful sound and projection. Although somewhat out of my price range at over €6,000, this gorgeous guitar would be a fine instrument on the concert stage.

I dropped by the shops of luthier Felix Manzanero, which I'd visited on previous trips to Madrid, and Headbanger Rare Guitars, which often features jam sessions, but contrary to claims on their websites, both shops were closed for the month, casualties of August in Madrid.

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER *TALLER*

One afternoon, I popped into the basement workshop of Felipe Conde on Calle Arrieta. Conde Hermanos is another dynasty of luthiers (since 1915) and another line with an acrimonious split, this one between Felipe and his brother Mariano, whose shop is located a few blocks away on the other side of Plaza Ópera.

The Condes' most prominent guitarist was Paco de Lucía, the flamenco great who died in 2014. Another Conde player is the singer, songwriter, and poet Leonard Cohen, who praised the guitar maker when he received the Príncipe de Asturias Award for Letters, one of Spain's most important cultural prizes. Other clients have included Tomatito, Sabicas, Camarón de la Isla, Bob Dylan, Al Di Meola, and the King of Spain, who, while still a prince, gave a Conde guitar to the Emperor of Japan.

Felipe Conde Sr. and his brother Mariano learned the luthier craft from their father and uncle, who had inherited the business from their uncle, Domingo Esteso. Esteso had apprenticed earlier in the Ramírez workshop. (Agustín Barrios Mangoré played a Domingo Esteso guitar.) Now, Felipe Sr.'s children, Felipe Jr. and Maria, are honing their craft in the intimate workshop; it's definitely a family affair.

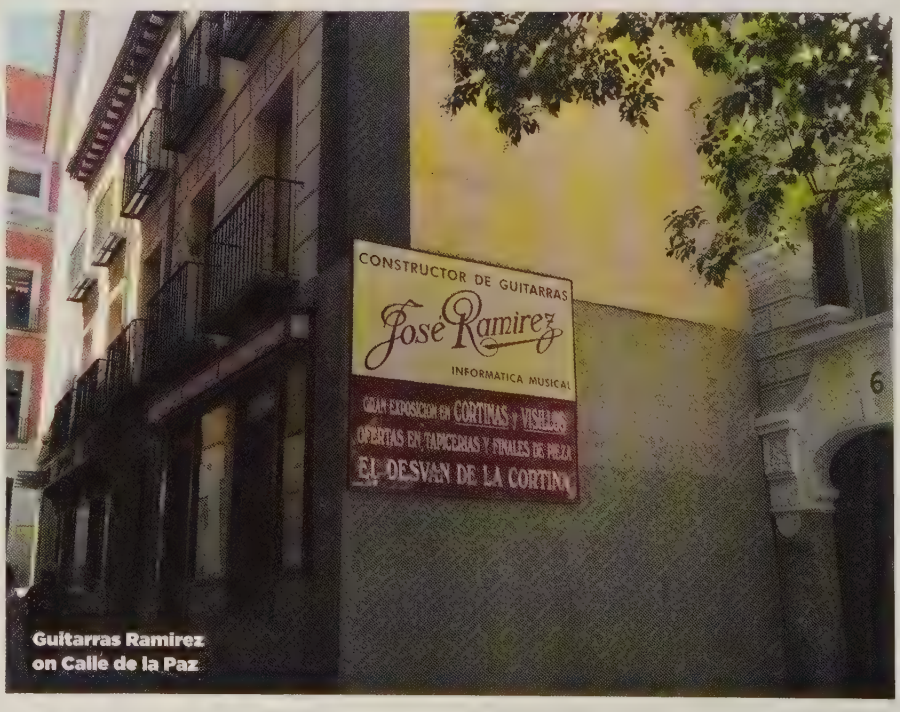
David Adizes welcomed me to the shop, and quizzed me about what kind of guitar I might desire. He handed me the nice-looking "CE 2," made from cocobolo (also available in rosewood). This studio model, around €3,500, is made elsewhere and "inspected, adjusted, and certified" by the Conde shop. Next I played the "CC 36," a concert model, resonant, well-rounded in tone, a beautiful guitar. Felipe Sr. offered me a slight discount off the €4,500 price.

Felipe Sr. sat down and chatted over a couple of *espressos*. He talked proudly about his daughter, Maria, still one of the relatively few women in the guitar-building world. "She's beginning to find her own personality in the craft of guitar-making." His son, Felipe Jr., works there as well. The workshop is small but all three use their own tools, develop their own styles and particular characteristics, and sign their own guitars on the Conde label. He showed me one of Maria's first guitars, a pretty instrument sporting a bright red cedar top and gleaming rosewood sides, on which I played one of my own compositions. Maria peaked out from the workshop and smiled broadly. "The guitar expresses what the player feels inside, and that passion is born inside the workshop," Felipe Sr. says.

Felipe Sr. next showed me the "Centenario," modeled after one of Domingo Esteso's guitars, made in 1915, which was owned and played by Daniel Fortea, one of Francisco Tárrega's disciples. The guitar uses Madagascar rosewood that has been drying for 50 years, Felipe Sr. explains. It costs €12,000—though I might be able to get a slight discount. I'll start saving my euros.

THE BACKSTREETS

On the outskirts of the city, near Madrid's Barajas airport in Paracuellos de Jarama, I visited the workshop of luthier Geronimo Mateos. It was early afternoon, still hot and quite dry. Madrid has the perfect climate for drying wood. When I explained that I was looking for a concert guitar between €2,000 and €4,000, Mateos laughed heartily and said that for €4,000 he could sell me *two* guitars.



Guitarras Ramirez on Calle de la Paz

Luthier Geronimo Mateos in his workshop

"Too many luthiers charge a premium, and it's really not necessary," Mateos explained in Spanish. "I try to make a very nice guitar at a very reasonable price. My shop is far from the center of Madrid [where] the rents there are too high. I used to have a *taller* downtown, now I own this workshop and don't have to charge as much for my instruments."

Mateos puttered around the back of the shop and pulled out a "Toledo," his third up from an entry-level model, and quite a steal at just over €1,000. It had a nice tone, but I asked what else he had. As he poked through cases in the back of the shop, Mateos noted that he has been most influenced by the French luthier Robert Bouchet.

"I've used his method of interior bracing for years, although I've modified it slightly—I employ one extra brace," Mateos says. "My son, Federico, is already exploring his own style of bracing."

The luthier makes strikingly beautiful gypsy-jazz guitars in the Django Reinhardt style, and Federico is making archtop jazz guitars as well. "All the guitars are made in my workshop by myself and my son," Mateos says. "We don't have guitars made elsewhere and put them under our labels. That means we can't make very many guitars each year."

He hunted around a bit more and found a "Segovia" model. The brilliant spruce top, nearly purple-colored rosewood back and sides, ebony fretboard, and bridge were attractive; the ebony rosette was spare but appealing. It also featured a dual adjustable truss rod in the neck. I started to play, and told Mateos I was impressed by the instrument's balanced tone.

"That's what I emphasize," he says. "To me, volume is not the most important characteristic. I aim to have a very good balance between the strings, between different positions along the neck, to faithfully reproduce what the guitarist wants in terms of expressiveness."

A man Mateos introduced as Paco was placing shellac (French polish) on an instrument. "This is the one thing I don't do myself. Shellac is quite sensitive, and Paco is a furniture maker and a master." The "Segovia" model was finished in a polyurethane lacquer, which I personally preferred. Each finish has its advantages and disadvantages; shellac is beautiful, and warm, but sensitive to perspiration and scratching, and thus more difficult to care for and maintain.

The "Segovia" was priced at only €1,300 and Mateos offered me a reasonable discount, but it came with a padded gig bag. Fortunately, he offered an optional hardshell wooden case, quite handsome and handmade in Portugal, well worth the extra €130. All in, it was €1,230 for a fine, handmade classical guitar and hardshell case, considerably less than I'd anticipated for a luthier-made instrument of concert-level quality. We completed the transaction, and fortunately, Turkish airlines had no problem letting me bring the instrument on board to Istanbul, and then a few days later, back to Washington, DC.

Now we're getting ready for the studio.

John W. Warren (johnwwarren.com) is an academic publisher, guitarist, and composer. He is recording his first CD of original compositions and Latin American guitar music.

BRANDT'S 'BUBBLES'

Southern California luthier Greg Brandt is making world-class custom guitars

by Adam Perlmutter

While the world of custom steel-string guitars is rife with inlay art—the colorful, pictorial style of William "Grit" Laskin and the mosaic patterns of Ervin Somogyi are two notable examples—such ornamentation is generally avoided in classical guitar-making. The master luthier Greg S. Brandt recently challenged the prevailing aesthetic when, in preparation for the 2015 La Guitarra Festival in San Luis Obispo, California, last September, he built a pair of guitars with rosettes having geometric shapes echoed elsewhere on the instruments.

These idiosyncratic designs—nicknamed (by his apprentice, to the luthier's chagrin) "Bubbles" and "Tiles," after their respective decorative patterns—are made from a matching set of Indian rosewood; Bubbles has a spruce top and Tiles, cedar. I had the pleasure of getting to know Bubbles, a world-class contender in the arena of fine custom classical guitars.

TONALLY INSPIRING

I admittedly came favorably disposed to review Bubbles, having heard nothing but good things about Brandt and his work. The luthier, whose workbench is in North Hollywood, California, has been building guitars for four decades, for players ranging from the classical great Perfecto de Castro to the late studio icon Tommy Tedesco. His instruments have been heard in concert halls and on soundtracks for movies such as *Goodfellas*, *Blade Runner*, and *Field of Dreams*.

But I was unprepared for just how fine a guitar this would be. Its voice is resplendent, to say the least. The lowest notes have the most impressive presence and depth of sound, while the highest possess a beautiful fullness and lack of stridency—the ideal tonal balance. Bubbles is loud and responsive, too; dulcet when played gently, and a cannon when provoked by the plucking hand. It's a sound that will fill up a concert hall for sure.

Whether playing modern fare like an excerpt from Hans Werner Henze's *Royal Winter Music*, lute pieces by the Renaissance composer John Dowland, or bossa nova chord-melody arrangements, Bubbles feels fresh and inspiring: I hear new subtleties when working through familiar territory. What's more, this newly built guitar, apparently having been played very little, was already starting to open up, sonically speaking, in the short time I spent with it.

Bubbles plays effortlessly. The neck, with the customary 52mm nut, is extremely comfortable to grip in all regions, and the action is low and buzz-free. There is a consistently good sound across all regions of the fretboard, with no dead spots on the neck. All of the fretted notes and open strings ring vibrantly, as do the natural harmonics, and the guitar's intonation is perfect.

STEEPED IN TRADITION

Though Brandt is adventurous enough to take on the occasional idiosyncratic commission—in 2009 he built a 10-string guitar for de Castro—his building is for the most part traditional, indebted to great European builders, such as Hermann Hauser. He uses the traditional fan bracing, seven fans and two chevron bars, and instead of the traditional Spanish heel method of construction, he opts for a special mortise-and-tenon joint in mating the neck and body, which he finds advantageous in setting the neck angle.

The craftsmanship on Bubbles is surpassingly good. Inside the box, all of the bracing and kerfing has been meticulously shaped, sanded, and glued. The frets are perfectly crowned and polished. All of the inlay work is rendered with impressive precision, and the guitar's nitrocellulose lacquer finish is thinly applied and rubbed to a uniformly faultless gloss.

Bubbles' inlay work might not be to every guitarist's taste, but it's articulated beautifully. The guitar is as stunning to the eyes as it is to the ears. Against the rosette's mahogany backdrop are a series of spheres in assorted sizes, made from various shades of walnut. This theme is echoed on the bridge bar as well as on the butt end and the back. (Potential detractors will be glad to know that the guitar would cost $1,500 less without these embellishments.) Rosewood body binding, heel cap, and headstock cap lend elegance and visual coherence to the design.

LUTHERIE AT ITS FINEST

Thanks to the use of CNC machinery and other technological developments, the guitar market is teeming with good options, in terms of sound and playability, when it comes to production-model guitars. Spending time with Greg Brandt's Standard Concert Model, though, is an excellent reminder of what a transformative experience it can be to play the finest luthier-made guitar: an instrument worthy of any serious concert guitarist. **CG**

AT A GLANCE

GREG S. BRANDT STANDARD CONCERT MODEL

BODY
Solid European spruce top; Indian rosewood back and sides; gloss nitrocellulose lacquer finish

NECK
Mahogany neck with ebony fretboard; 650mm scale length; 52mm nut; Sloane tuning machines with ebony buttons

EXTRAS
EJ46 Pro-Arté Nylon, Hard Tension strings; TKL hardshell case

PRICE
$7,000 base/ $8,500 as reviewed. Made in the United States
gregbrandtguitars.com

JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTOS

SILENT STUNNER

Yamaha's SLG200N is a surprisingly natural-sounding, nylon-string guitar designed for home or travel

by Adam Perlmutter

Yamaha's new SLG200N is called a Silent Guitar for good reason. Played unplugged it's got a hushed tone that would not be heard over a conversation at moderate volume. But, thanks to its redesigned electronics system, when auditioned with headphones, it sounds lush and reverberant, as if heard in a concert hall. The SLG200N is a member of the third generation of Yamaha's Silent Guitar, series, and it's a total boon for guitarists living in close quarters and prone to late-night inspiration, or travelers unwilling to bring along their fine concert instrument.

COMPACT WONDER

The SLG200N comes in a long and narrow gig bag that looks more like it holds sporting equipment than a guitar. (It's designed to fit into an airplane's overhead compartment.) The treble-side frame is permanently affixed to the body. A bass-side frame attaches to the guitar in seconds via a pair of screws. The completed instrument wouldn't look out of place in a gallery of contemporary sculptures.

It initially feels foreign to hold the SLG200N, which is as thin as a typical electric solid-body guitar. But despite the amount of negative space between the body and the frame, the instrument weighs 4.5 pounds, in the range of conventional classical guitars. And its full-size, 650mm scale-length neck removes any sense of awkwardness from handling the instrument.

Given its novel construction, it would not be appropriate to judge the SLG200N by the usual standards of craftsmanship, but the guitar feels solid and well-constructed. The fretwork and nut and saddle slots are all perfectly articulated, and the gloss finish on the mahogany body and leg rest—available in Translucent Black, Tobacco Brown Sunburst, and Natural Satin—is uniformly applied. There's nothing fragile or delicate about the instrument, and it is a relief not to have to worry about babying it, like you would a French-polished classical guitar.

The SLG200N plays agreeably well. Its slender neck and low action will appeal to contemporary players who ven-

It's a boon for guitarists living in close quarters and prone to late-night inspiration, or those unwilling to travel with a fine concert instrument.

ture outside of the classical repertoire, especially those coming to the nylon-string from the electric; though traditional players might not like this feel. However, the SLG200N's dual-action truss rod—a feature most classical guitars lack—allows for more control of the setup.

HIGHLY REALISTIC SOUNDS

At the heart of the SLG200N is Yamaha's Studio Response Technology pickup and preamp system, which models the sound of a concert nylon-string recorded with high-quality microphones in a professional recording studio. The system includes the usual tone controls, plus a blend knob for adjusting the ratio of sound coming from the under-saddle pickup versus the preamp's modeled sounds; another knob lets you graduate between different digital reverb and chorus effects.

There's also an auxiliary control, along with an eighth-inch input for plugging in an MP3 player or another peripheral, and a Fender Stratocaster-style quarter-inch output, for playing through an amp. Though it's powered by two AA batteries, the preamp also includes an AC-adapter jack.

Yamaha included earphones with the SLG200N, which has an eighth-inch headphone output. But I used Grado PS500 headphones, my go-to tool for transcribing music, to test the guitar's sound. Straight away, I was struck by the range of gorgeous sonorities. With the dial turned all the way to the miked position, the instrument sounds convincingly like a good classical guitar recorded in a studio. Turning the dial all the way to the pickup setting yields a warm tone with a pronounced attack. The reverbs sound rich and organic, as does the chorus.

Plugged into a Fender Acoustasonic amplifier via the guitar's quarter-inch output, the SLG200N has a natural, full-bodied sound. A classical recitalist probably wouldn't use the guitar in a concert hall, but the instrument would make an excellent choice for, say, a live performance with a modern jazz group. It would also be a smart tool for recording directly into a digital audio workstation.

With such uncannily lifelike sounds, Yamaha has definitely taken things to the next level in this new generation of Silent Guitars.

Adam Perlmutter transcribes, arranges, and engraves music for numerous publications. See his website at adamperlmutter.com.

AT A GLANCE

YAMAHA SLG200N

BODY

Mahogany body; laminated rosewood-and-maple frame with cutaway; gloss or satin finish on body and satin finish on frame

NECK

Mahogany neck with rosewood fretboard; 650mm scale length; 50mm nut; engraved tuning machines; satin finish

EXTRAS

SRT Powered System electronics; deluxe carry bag; stereo earphones

PRICE

$1,015 list/$629.99 street.
Made in China. usa.yamaha.com

JOEY LUSTERMAN PHOTOS

A LEGACY OF GREAT GUITARS

2007 Thomas Humphrey Millennium "Le Sacrifice"

by Sharon Isbin

Thomas Humphrey, who died at the age of 59 in 2008, was one of the most influential American classical guitar makers. His guitars have been played by artists including the Assad Brothers, Michael Chapdelaine, David Tanenbaum, and myself, and luthiers the world over have integrated his ideas in their own designs. Starting his career as an apprentice to Michael Gurian in the early 1970s, Humphrey never stopped searching, experimenting, and dreaming about advancing the instrument.

Humphrey's landmark Millennium design came to him in a dream in 1985. Morphing elements of the guitar with those of a harp, Humphrey designed a raised fretboard and forward-pitched neck, causing the strings to pull the top at a steeper angle than on most guitars. The design met the goal of increasing volume, and it also improved playability in the upper registers.

Among Humphrey's last projects was a collaboration with artist Tamara Codor, who painted the backs of three of his guitars, including the beautiful 2007 Millennium "Le Sacrifice" shown here. The subtlety and magic of the image of two singers derives from the cascading hair which emerges unpainted from the natural undulating waves of the grain. Built with a cedar top and Brazilian rosewood back and sides, the guitar's sound is warm, dark, resonant, and lyrical, with deep, rich basses and bell-like trebles. I inaugurated the guitar on my album, *Journey to the New World* (2009), featuring music ranging from the Renaissance to bluegrass on which I was joined by guests Joan Baez and fiddler Mark O'Connor.

Just ten days before his untimely death, Humphrey was in the audience when I used this guitar to perform the *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. Afterward, his wife, Martha, told me that during the performance Humphrey had tears of joy running down his face. She told me she'd "never seen him so happy, moved, and relaxed, as if in a state of grace." She realized that night, for the first time, the profound meaning of Humphrey's artistry. We visited the next day at their farm, admiring the horses, handcrafted swimming hole, and marvelous landscape. I never guessed this would be the last time we would be together.

Tom was a beacon of light and joy. His voice will live for an eternity in the instruments he crafted so lovingly, born anew each day in vibrant harmonies.

This article originally appeared in the November 2008 issue of Acoustic Guitar.

Sharon Isbin and Thomas Humphrey

MILLENNIUM BACK—COURTESY TAMARA CADOR; ISBIN AND HUMPHREY—COURTESY MARTHA HUMPHREY; MILLENNIUM FRONT—COURTESY SHARON ISBIN.

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WILDUNDLEISE.DE PHOTO

GREAT EXPECTATIONS EXCEEDED

Laura Snowden dazzles with premiere and old favorites at Wigmore Hall

by Graham Wade

Laura Snowden's November 21, 2015, recital, sponsored by the Julian Bream Trust, was one of the highlights of the season. Bream's charitable trust, in his own words, aims to provide "financial assistance to the less well-endowed of our young and gifted students, and especially to those whose principal instrumental interests lie in the study of the lute and guitar." As well as offering a prestigious Wigmore Hall concert, the Trust provides funds for the commission of a new guitar work—this year it was by the composer Julian Anderson (b. 1967), composer-in-residence at Wigmore Hall.

For any young player, it would have been a daunting experience with Julian Bream and John Williams in the audience, as well as a host of "guitar people" on the British scene, such as Gilbert Biberian, Carlos Bonell, Christoph Denoth, Steve Goss, Forbes Henderson, Mark Houghton, Michael Lewin, John and Cobie Mills, Thérèse Wassily Saba, Richard Wright, and Declan Zapala.

The performance was preceded at 6 PM by an "Artists in Conversation" session between Julian Bream and Julian Anderson, with gentle reminiscences on life and the beauty of music from the great guitarist, and some discussion of the difficulties of writing for guitar from the composer.

Laura Snowden began her recital with the lyrical sounds of *Sonatina* by Lennox Berkeley. This is one of those pieces that sounds easy but is full of technical challenges, especially in the third movement. Snowden threaded her way through the multiple intricacies with total assurance. Frank Martin's *Quatre pièces brèves* followed, receiving a fine interpretation which elicited a variety of color, sonority, and a sensitive attention to detail.

Before the intermission came the biggest challenge of the evening, Benjamin Britten's *Nocturnal After John Dowland, Op.*

Backstage, Laura Snowden is greeted by composer Julian Anderson and Julian Bream (right).

GRAHAM WADE PHOTO

70, a work of which Bream is the supreme maestro. Snowden came through the fire with courage and control, giving each variation refined definition and a sense of individuality. Her rendering of the theme was magical in its intensity.

After the interval came Julian Anderson's new work, *Catalan Peasant with Guitar*, named after a large blue painting by Joan Miró and dedicated to Bream. The composer, in a preface to the work, commented that he has attempted "to encapsulate in sound the direct and fierce mood of the painting." One characteristic of the piece is that at one stage the G string of the guitar is gradually retuned until it is a quarter-tone flat, the idea being that throughout the slow section "new resonances are exploited . . . by turns bell-like, meditative, lyrical, and impassioned." Snowden embraced the work with great commitment, developing the various techniques adroitly, including such devices as imitating the Indian tanpura, *rasgueados*, harmonics, and a final polyphonic toccata episode with a D tuning.

A triptych of three, long-established compositions followed, Roberto Gerhard's "Fantasía," Manuel de Falla's "Homenaje pour le tombeau de Claude Debussy," and Albert Roussel's "Segovia, Op. 29." Again, Snowden's performances were thoughtfully interpreted, offering variety as well as unity to the disparate trio of works.

The final work on the program, Federico Mompou's *Suite Compostelana*, written for Segovia, was played with a sense of poetry. The movements suited Snowden's quietly introspective style, and she drew the audience subtly into the music with a sweet range of sonorities and well-chosen tempi. As an encore, the audience appreciated the tranquil simplicity of the "Sarabande" from J.S. Bach's *Cello Suite No. 5 BWV 1011*, reminiscent of the great cellist Pablo Casals, who also used to play this movement as a finale to concerts.

Snowden received rapturous applause throughout her concert at Wigmore Hall. At the time of writing it seems she has not made a commercial recording, but I look forward to her being signed by a leading label. Snowden is not only an excellent guitarist who is technically virtuosic, but also a true musician whose interpretative capabilities are profound and exciting. A brilliant international career awaits her over the coming decade. **CG**

Tom Kerstens' G Plus Ensemble

Kings Place, London
October 30, 2015

The London Guitar Festival, at the central London venue of Kings Place, included a concert by the festival director, Tom Kerstens, who played music he has been commissioning for the International Guitar Festival (IGF) over the years, as well as the premiere of two new commissions: *Six Songs for Guitar* by Howard Skempton (b. 1947), and *Spook* by Anna Meredith (b. 1978). The concert was also part of a series organized by Kings Place called "Minimalism Unwrapped," which ran throughout 2015 and included more than 40 concerts and events. IGF commissioned Skempton, a British minimalist composer, to write a solo guitar work, as the compulsory piece for the 2015 London International Guitar Competition Finals held on October 31, 2015. Meredith's concert piece was for two guitars, string quartet, and percussion.

In the first half of the concert, Kerstens played solo guitar on a series of fairly recent pieces. "Guitar Prelude" by

Laurence Crane (b. 1959) offered a different approach to simplicity, using phrase repetitions with small changes that created a mesmerizing effect. "Air and Variation" by Michael Parsons (b. 1938) had attractive harmonic ideas which drew the listener in, but then came to an end suddenly. As one might expect, the *Six Songs for Guitar* have a feeling of simplicity about them—music with an almost fragile, skeletal frame, but with a subtle, underlying depth. (Speaking to Howard Skempton about his compositions, he explained that this form of simplicity is quite frightening for performers, because in order to give a successful performance, they must have a very high level of musicianship.) The three pieces in *Guitar Music* by Joe Cutler (b. 1968) ended with a swinging jazz rhythm which led comfortably into *Fantasy with Anniversary Chorale* (2013) by Gabriel Jackson (b. 1962), in which the composer time-travels from the music of Dowland to the avant-garde. Here, I thought it was unfortunate that Kerstens' playing was so cautious and with very little contrast.

In the second half of the concert, Kerstens (on classical and electric guitar) was joined by the young and vibrant Ligeti String Quartet—Mandhira de Saram and Patrick Dawkins, violins; Richard Jones, viola; and Valerie Welbanks, cello—who are dedicated to performing contemporary works; the young British guitarist Adam Brown; and Karen Hutt on marimba, vibraphone, and percussion. There was a little difficulty in establishing rhythmic unity here, caused by Kerstens, but when Adam Brown was playing, everything worked well.

The rhythmic and harmonic ideas in Anna Meredith's *Spook* produced a refreshingly unique sound. One could imagine Meredith's pleasure in composing this work, appropriately premiered on Halloween night. "Utopia," "Dead Space," and "Polarisation," by Joby Talbot (b. 1971), are three quite different pieces, but what they have in common is they engage the listener emotionally and hold your attention. The four pieces by John Metcalfe (b. 1964)—"Close Static," "Outer Core," "Heather," and "Gorse"—are some of the works he has been commissioned to write by IGF, and they are attractive and distinctive. (Many of Talbot's and Metcalfe's pieces can be heard on Kerstens' G Plus Ensemble's recording called *Utopia*, on Real World Records.) The concert ended on a high note with "Take these Broken Wings" by the German-born British composer Max Richter (b. 1966).

I absolutely enjoyed all of these compositions, which had a different ambiance and brought some refreshing ideas to light. The creators were all mainstream British composers who do not play the guitar. For this, Tom Kerstens is to be congratulated. This concert carried the title "Ignite," and I am sure many guitarists will be inspired to carry the flame Kerstens has lit through his dedication to new works. —*Thérèse Wassily Saba*

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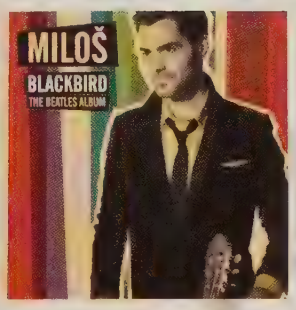

Blackbird: The Beatles Album
Miloš Karadaglic
Mercury Classics/UMC

POP! GOES MILOŠ ON APPEALING SET OF BEATLES CLASSICS

Sergio Assad's arrangements are lively and inventive

by Blair Jackson

Miloš Karadaglic's desire to bring the classical guitar to new audiences is no secret, and this sort of pop crossover disc is exactly the kind of vehicle that can make that happen. Of course, playing Beatles songs on classical guitar is not a new idea—is there a guitar student in recent years who *hasn't* played Toru Takemitsu's beautiful arrangement of "Yesterday," "Michelle," "Here There and Everywhere," or "Hey Jude"? Or Leo Brouwer's many Beatles arrangements? All of these songs, except "Hey Jude," appear on *Blackbird*, and are joined by 11 other indisputable pop classics, mostly tuneful ballads by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, or George Harrison.

In what is sure to raise a few eyebrows in purist CG circles, Miloš (as he bills himself these days) augments most of the songs on the disc with other players, including British cellist Steven Isserlis, sitarist Anoushka Shankar, jazz bassist Chris Hill, and a slew of string players.

And, what's this? Singers Tori Amos and Gregory Porter sing "She's Leaving Home" and "Let It Be" respectively, each offering restrained yet emotional performances. Guitarist Sergio Assad wrote all the arrangements, except the Takemitsu version of "Yesterday," and without exception they are tasteful and elegant.

My favorites are the tunes that deviate most from the Beatles originals—the jazzy "Come Together," "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" played mostly as a guitar-sitar duet, and a slowed-down "All My Loving," which includes a trill passage worthy of Tárrega (well, almost). But the disc is full of lovely touches, from the gentle, lilting takes of "And I Love Her" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," to the haunting harmonics opening of "Here Comes the Sun."

Miloš' playing is faultless throughout, and overall the album beautifully captures the Beatles' mastery of melody and pop-song form. **CG**

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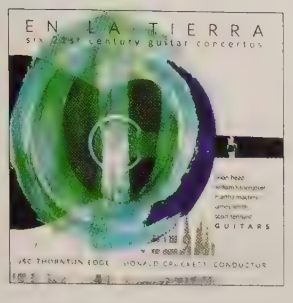


En La Tierra: Six 21st-Century Guitar Concertos

Brian Head, William Kanengiser, Scott Tennant, James Smith, Martha Masters (guitars), with USC Thornton Edge, Donald Crockett conductor
Doberman-Yppan

Top guitarists and ensemble bring life to adventurous program

A double CD with six new concertos is quite an event. Five years in the making, this is the inspiration of the famous publishing house Doberman-Yppan and its founder, Paul Gerrits.

En la Tierra, by Donald Crockett, is in one movement of several sections and is accompanied by a small chamber orchestra whose contrasting sounds add a subtle and varied background to the guitar, with the music ranging from aggressive to playful to sad, in a very modern idiom. *Kaleidoscope*, by Dusan Bogdanovic, is in three movements with jazz elements that immediately jump out at you, complete with note bends that sound like they have come straight from a rock guitar. Interestingly, all three movements are based on the same material, with moments of complex rhythms and advanced tonality thrown in—and the last movement is dance-like and full of animation. *A Fanciful Plainte*, by Brian Head, begins with exotic string chords before the guitar enters, continuing the idea. The two then carry on a complex conversation moving ideas back and forth. The music is mostly in a modern but friendly idiom, with moments of dense string layering often accompanying the soloist.

CD 2 begins with Steven Gate's three-movement *Mystery of Constellation*, which concerns the composer's emotional reactions to the night sky. It is in a noticeably astringent idiom, with the orchestra often acting as a more equal partner and the writing a mixture of the contemplative and the exceedingly animated.

Cuento Desde la Frontera is a new work by Simone Iannarelli that has a connection with a poem of the same name by the composer. Set in one movement, this "Tale from the Border" is less tonal than the other works and has many beautiful moments of emotive writing.

The final piece, *Prayers,* also by Bogdanovic, is set in one movement for two guitars and orchestra. After a plaintive string opening, the two soloists continue with haunting melodies that exotically interweave, although the pace throughout remains slow.

This fine pair of CDs proves how much variety there is in the modern concerto.

—Chris Dumigan

The Evidence

José Luis Pastor
Lindoro

An invigorating blast from the pre-Renaissance

Subtitled "The Medieval Art of the Plectrum," this fascinating release finds an accomplished and exuberant performer wielding a range of Renaissance and pre-Renaissance instruments reconstructed from iconographic sources. Modal melodies over drone basses are the order of the day, with the interest maintained by the wide range of wonderfully hollow and percussive voices that characterize the lutes and guitars that were central to Europe's musical heritage in the centuries before John Dowland was born.

All is taken care of on the academic front, with manuscripts meticulously identified and key researchers in the field credited in the performer's notes. Finally, for the benefit of listeners of a certain age who are struggling to figure out where they've heard the "Danza Inglesa" before, it's a close relative of the tune recorded under the title "Estampie" by the prog-rock band Gryphon way back in 1973. *—Paul Fowles*

Bach, Pärt, Des Prez

Enno Voorhorst
Sena

Lots of Bach and more on Dutch guitarist's collection

This disc contains 14 tracks—two by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt (b. 1935), one by Josquin Des Prez (1455–1521) and 11 by J.S. Bach—played by Dutch guitarist Voorhorst, whose reputation, particularly as a Bach transcriber, precedes him. He opens with Bach's contemplative "Chorale Prelude for Organ" (BWV 731), followed by the "Prelude from the Third Violin Partita" (BWV 1006), both wonderful performances. After playing Bach's "Little Prelude for Clavier" (BWV 934), he plays the lone piece by Des Prez, his French *chanson* "Mille Regretz" (arranged by vihuelist Luis de Narváez as "Canción del Emperador"). Then comes the famous "Prelude No. 1 in C" from *The Well-Tempered Klavier*, in a version (here in D) that actually works successfully on the guitar. Another little-played Bach—his "Sinfonia" from *Cantata* (BWV 182) gives way to Arvo Part's famous "Spiegel im Spiegel," originally for violin and piano, a lovely work that I had my doubts about until I heard it here. Using a very low C for effect, he makes a superb job of its ten minutes. A movement from the *St. Matthew Passion*, full of lovely counterpoint and harmonies only Bach could have written, is followed by the "Adagio" and "Fugue" from the *First Violin Sonata* (BWV 1001), here in A minor. The "Actus Tragicus" from the *Cantata* (BWV 106) showcases a beautiful, slow melody underpinned by wonderful harmonies, and then the disc closes with three more standout tracks: Bach's "Prelude in Dm" (BWV 999)—perhaps Bach's most famous "guitar" work—Part's "Fratres," and Bach's beautiful "Air from the Third Suite for Orchestra."

This is a fabulous CD that deserves to be in everyone's collections. *—CD*

Platero y Yo

Veronika Meier
Guild Switzerland

Swiss guitarist reshuffles Torroba's 'Castillos'

The practice of sandwiching a little-known modern work between two established favorites is engagingly applied here by Swiss guitarist Veronika Meier—with the filling being the 1983 suite *Alcibiade* Op.42 by her recently departed compatriot Boris Mersson (1921–2013). Comprising six soundbite miniatures using only moderately spicy chromatic language, Mersson's offering may not be destined for global acclaim, but it's more than worthy of the refined presentation Meier serves up.

Surrounding the Mersson piece are nine movements from the Castelnuovo-Tedesco take on *Platero* and the original "Segovia eight" from Torroba's 14-part *Castillos de España*. Meier's running order differs from that of the Segovia recording, which raises the intriguing question of whether it was Torroba, Segovia, or a third party who chose the order in the first place. After all, the Segovia editions published by Editorial Cadencia toward the end of Torroba's life were issued as individual sheets and are not numbered.Although I retain the view that Segovia in the studio got it right, the stylish and restrained playing alone makes Meier's reshuffle well worth a listen. —*PF*

Kouyoumdjian Plays Bach

João Kouyoumdjian
Pomegranate Music

Superior versions of Bach cello and violin works

Could it be that the Cello Suites and Violin Sonatas/Partitas have overtaken the "lute" works as the first-call Bach of the 21st-century guitarist? From Segovia onward, the "Sarabande" and "Bourrée" from *Lute Suite No.1* (BWV 996) were perceived as the first rung on the ladder, with later generations graduating to all six movements. But despite all the CDs and vinyl weighing down record shelves worldwide, when did you last hear BWV 996 performed live?

While the "lute" works retreat to a relatively low profile, Bach's legacy for unaccompanied violin and cello takes center stage, with Eliot Fisk's recently reissued recordings of the violin cycle (reviewed on p.86) illustrating one such pace-setting manifestation. Another that deserves its place in the pantheon is this 2015 release, in which Brazilian guitarist João Kouyoumdjian fields the first Cello Suite alongside the second and third Violin Sonatas, complete with their mighty and technically daunting fugues.

Although Kouyoumdjian studied under Sharon Isbin at Juilliard, the connection doesn't result in a surfeit of cross-string ornamentation; he prefers the single-string variety. What's here are mature and often gripping accounts of some of the highest-octane Baroque the guitar has the capacity to deliver. The fugues inevitably leave the deepest impression, but the smaller movements enjoy equally noble treatments. Nowhere is this more gratifying than in the final "Allegro" from the second Violin Sonata, which Kouyoumdjian wisely places last on the agenda in this masterful presentation of premium-grade Bach. —*PF*

Seonveh: Ketil Hvoslef—Music for Guitar

Stein-Erik Olsen
Simax Classics

A fine Norwegian composer is fêted by a countryman

At 76 years old, the Norwegian composer Ketil Hvoslef is not exactly over-recorded. Indeed, I had never come across his music before, but on the basis of this disc, expertly spearheaded by fellow Norwegian Stein-Erik Olsen, I'm glad I did. It begins with the *Guitar Quintet* (for guitar, two violins, viola, and cello), in five movements spanning a substantial 27-plus minutes. The first movement is dominated by a repeated note pattern that is always in flux and involves much use of pizzicato. The second is a plaint with hushed strings throughout. An enigmatic, scherzo-like third is followed by a gently dissonant fourth with many quiet moments. The energetic fifth boasts a clock-like rhythmic pattern throughout and heralds an exciting close to a fascinating piece.

Seonveh (for three guitars) is in one 18-minute movement, with several sections interlinking. A slow, mysterious start leads to a *piu mosso* and then to several contrasting ideas that are often full of strange but tonal ideas quite unlike any other composers I know of. The final section has a curious quote from Mozart's 40th before leading to an intense, strummed close.

The *Double Concerto for Flute, Guitar, and String Orchestra* from 1977 is in one 20-minute movement. The composer here imagines a love affair between the two main instruments, with many passages of

almost flighty interaction, leading finally to an ambiguous close. The last work, *Six Pieces for Six Strings* is a series of contrasting moods, all quite succinct. This is a fine CD, full of interesting, slightly off-the-wall music that grows on you. —*CD*

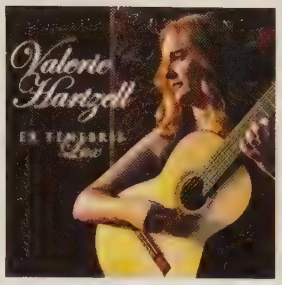
Spanish Night

Amadeus Guitar Duo
Naxos

A mixed bag of Rodrigo guitar concertos

In this triple bill of Joaquín Rodrigo concertos, the evergreen *Concierto de Aranjuez*, performed by Dale Kavanagh of the Amadeus Duo, is heard alongside *Concierto Madrigal* for two guitars (Kavanaugh and Duo partner Thomas Kirchhoff)—seen by many as "the best of the rest" in Rodrigo's legacy for guitar(s) with orchestra. The third item, *Concierto Andaluz* for four guitars, in which the Eden-Stell Duo (Mark Eden and Christopher Stell) complete the lineup, is arguably something of an "also-ran." The relentless clickety-clack rhythms of the "Tiempo de Bolero" show Rodrigo's guitar writing at its most formulaic, and the central "Adagio" fails to justify its 11-minute duration.

Apart from a few slightly untidy episodes in the quicker movements of *Concierto Madrigal*, all enjoy a smooth passage, ably supported by the Internationale Philharmonie under the baton of Horst-Hans Bäcker. —*PF*



Ex Tenebris Lux

Valerie Hartzell
Soundset Recordings

A fine mix of pieces, impeccably played

This American-born but UK-residing player's latest CD is a choice mix of the familiar and the not-so-familiar. Beginning with a quintet of Tárrega pieces, Hartzell immediately shows us how these pieces should really be played. She closes them with the familiar "Recuerdos de la Alhambra," sounding effortless and with an impeccably trouble-free tremolo technique often aspired to, but rarely achieved.

Manuel Ponce's *Sonata No. 3* is next, a famous piece written in the composer's more modern idiom, which, when I hear it played as well as this, makes me wonder what his (lost) second sonata must have sounded like, sandwiched between this and the *Sonata Mexicana* (No. 1), both fabulous works. Barrios' "Julia Florida" is emotive and flowing, with all the usual technical difficulties it presents completely absent from Hartzell's performance.

John Anthony Lennon's "Another's Fandango" is perhaps less well-known. Written in 1981 for David Starobin, a champion of new works for the guitar, this piece goes through many emotions and musical events in its nine minutes. Written in 2011 for a production of *King Lear*, Andy Mitchell's "Drift" is a hauntingly harmonized piece full of emotive writing, and is a real find. The final piece, Olga Amelkina-Vera's "Ex Tenebris" is a substantial work beginning in darkness and ending in lightness and joy—an altogether fitting conclusion to this beautifully played CD. —*CD*

New Music With Guitar Vol. 9

David Starobin
Bridge Records

A challenging outing from a champion of new music

According to the notes, this series started with an LP in 1981, the retro cover shot on the present release showing a youthful Starobin sporting a haircut reminiscent of the Arthurian heroes in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Recorded between 2007 and 2013, Vol. 9 contains a chamber work by Richard Wernick, a set of canons for violin and guitar by Poul Ruders, and a full-on guitar concerto by Paul Lansky. All are long-standing Starobin collaborators and all enjoy senior status in the more earnest branches of contemporary music.

Expect a challenging hour of listening, in which the brevity of the quirky contrapuntal miniatures in *Schrödinger's Cat* by Ruders provide a timely contrast with the more expansive offerings surrounding them. Better still, take time to discover each item individually, for this is a heavyweight, yet fulfilling agenda, from one of the guitar's most-respected supporters of new music. —*PF*

Oblivion

Dawidek-Poyner Duo
FHR

Guitar and oboe mesh on varied set

The oboist Monika Dawidek has been duetting with UK guitarist Russell Poyner since 2011. Here the repertoire is all Latin American and a mix of solo guitar and duets. The first duets are Ástor Piazzolla's "Oblivion," and "Libertango." Dawidek immediately shows us what a versatile musician she is and Poyner's guitar flows easily along beside her. Following that are two movements from Piazzolla's *Histoire du Tango* suite: the gorgeous "Bordel 1900," and "Café 1930." Again, the playing is very melodic, with plenty of swing in all the right places. Celso Machado's "Pacoca" is a welcome rarity, while the Luis Bonfa "Manhã de Carnaval" also has a vocal by Poyner and an added oboe cadenza by Louis Clark.

The guitar solos are the *5 Preludes* of Villa-Lobos, "Julia Florida," "Vals Op. 8 No. 3" by Agustín Barrios, and Dilermando Reis' *Xodo da Baiana*. And although the choice of pieces is fine, I could have done without another Villa-Lobos *Preludes* recording, as there is so much other music from this area rarely played.

That said, the recording is a fine mix of the well-known and the slightly more obscure, and although there were times when the oboe was not quite as suited to some of this music as the flute (for example, "Bordel 1900"), this is a small quibble in what is a quality recital. —*CD*

J.S. Bach: The Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin

Eliot Fisk
Nimbus Records (2 CDs)

Fisk goes his own way on creative Bach outing

Lute maestro Paul O'Dette once mischievously compared the sound of cross-string ornamentation with that of a doorbell. Listening to this uncompromising reissue from Eliot Fisk, that bell hardly stops ringing. Love it or not, Fisk is a world leader when it comes to showering cadences with more notes than many of us would consider physically playable. His detractors routinely accuse him of sacrificing refinement at the altar of dramatic impact, and even his staunchest admirers would have to concede there are instances of it here. But Fisk confounds his attackers by delivering the slower movements with the kind of old-world courtesy associated with a 1930s tea dance. Nowhere is this more compelling than in the "Siciliana" from the first sonata, where the level of Segovia-retro is such that few could match and none could surpass.

Finally, despite allowing the more lyrical passages all the space they could possibly crave, Fisk completes the "Chaconne" in an astonishing 12 minutes, thus making it home before any other guitarist currently on my shelf, not to mention the various illustrious fiddlers. May this unique and endlessly creative musician continue to plough his own furrow, unhindered by what others think. —*PF*

Homages

Christoph Denoth
Signum Classics

Quality versions of some long-standing favorites

Having given Swiss guitarist Christoph Denoth's CD of John Dowland a lukewarm reception in *CG*'s August 2014 issue, it's a pleasure to welcome more cordially what appears to be its sequel. Presenting a mixed bag in which the "homage" theme isn't always obvious, Denoth emerges as a mature and refined player whose capacity to deliver mostly familiar fare—by the likes of Falla, Rodrigo, Albeniz, and others—with style remains in evidence throughout. Starting with a punchy Tárrega-based account of the evergreen Joaquin Malats soundbite "Serenata Española," Denoth and producer Christopher Adler have opted for a spacious sound that immediately feels more "concert hall" than studio, which makes sense, as it was recorded in the Beethovensaal in Hannover.

Here and elsewhere, Denoth serves a classy account of a program where the only relative rarity is Fernando Sor's "Variation on a Scottish Theme," which has inexplicably spent its life in the shadow of the profoundly irritating and ever-present Op. 9. Although Denoth treats the outer passages of the Joaquín Turina "Sevillana Fantasia" with all their customary vitality, the prevailing mood in the performance as a whole is one of quiet contemplation. Only in the Turina and the arpeggio sections of the second and fourth Villa-Lobos *Preludes* is the spirit of restraint entirely dispelled. —PF

Xango
Quaternaglia
QGQ

Brazilian quartet shows skills and flair on exciting program

Quaternaglia, a quartet from São Paulo, Brazil, featuring three standard guitars and a 7-string, has been together for 20 years and is known for its contributions to the expansion of the guitar quartet repertoire. The group consists of Chrystian Dozza, Fabio Ramazzina, Thiago Abdalla, and Sidney Molina.

Villa-Lobos' "Choros No. 5," originally for piano, is first. One of 14 such compositions, this one has, at times, very exotic harmonies, but the quartet always sounds as one, so together are the players here. Almeida Prado's *Variaciones Sobre o Tema de Xango* is a theme followed by 14 short variations that show many influences, not the least of which are Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger, both of whom Prado knew. Ronaldo Miranda's *Suite No. 3* is in four movements. Also written for piano, this piece is full of dancing rhythms, and though short, each movement is immediately appealing. Sergio Molina's "Cancao Sem Fim" is song-like in style and attractively performed. Quartet member Dozza contributes "Sobre Um Tema de Gismonti," a fast, melodic work and one of the highlights of the CD. There are three works by Joao Luiz, a past member, who did some of the arranging on this CD. "Modinha," "Urbano," and "Kirsten" are great fun and clever throughout their 13 minutes. Paulo Bellinati's "Maracatu da Pipa" begins with a repeating motif on harmonics before the true melody appears in this lovely piece.

Finally, Villa-Lobos' "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9" closes the album. Originally written for string orchestra, it makes a great capper to an album of consistently fine playing and some very interesting works.

—CD

(Editor's note: In the Winter 2015 issue, the reviews of Dances Through the Centuries *and* Baroque Moments *were misattributed; they were both written by Chris Dumigan.)*

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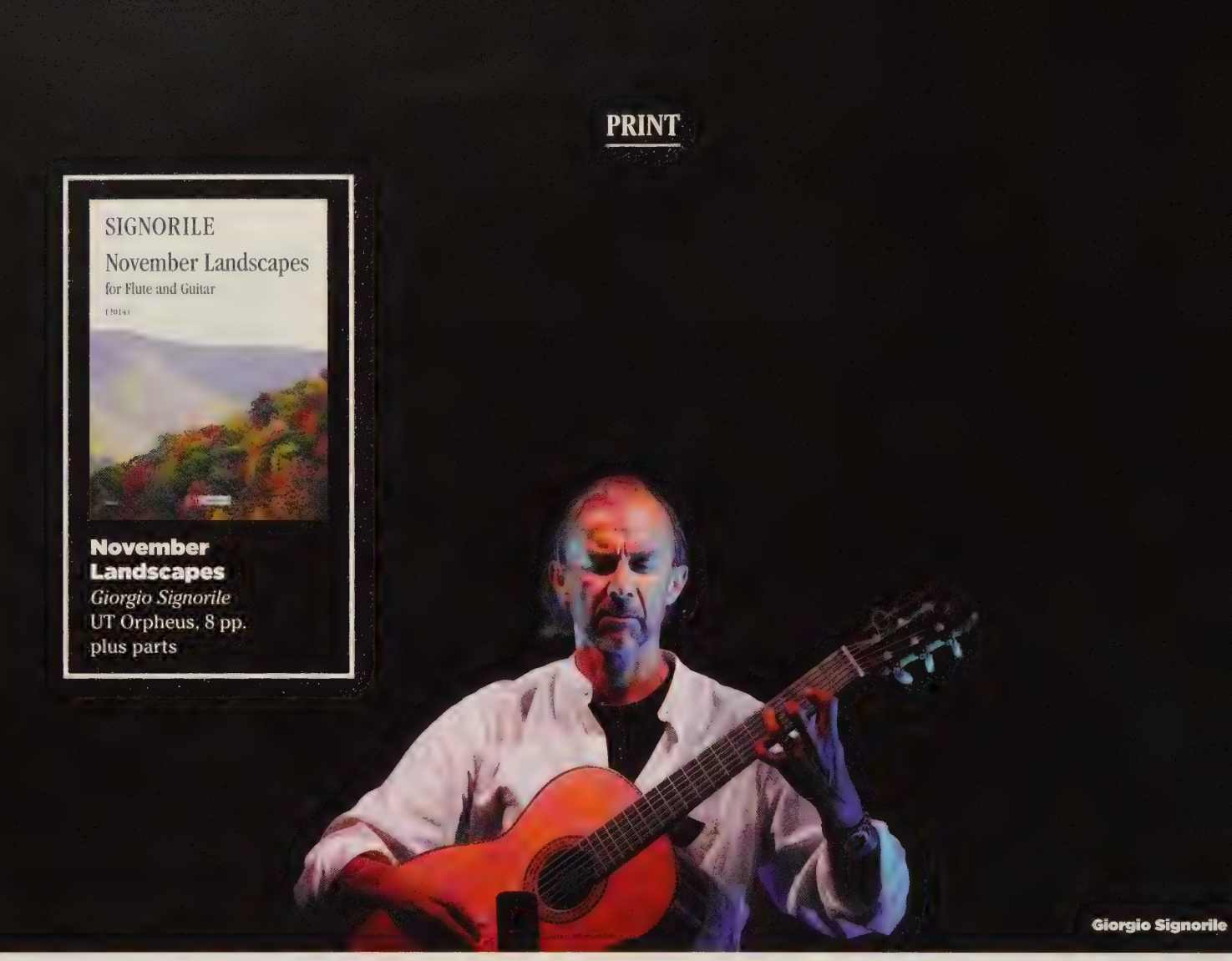


Giorgio Signorile

A MUSICAL PORTRAIT OF 'NOVEMBER LANDSCAPES'

Lovely flute-and-guitar piece could also work with two guitars

by Derek Hasted

Do you want the good news or the good news? The first is that this is a truly delightful pair of pieces by the Italian composer and guitarist Giorgio Signorile (b. 1962 in Cuneo) and dedicated to the Violauta Duo (Julio Ribeiro Alves, guitar, and flutist Wendell Dobbs). The second good news is that the flute part would work commendably well on a second guitar. Yes, there will be places where the guitar's lower pitch will make the melody fall below the accompaniment, but it will definitely still work, as the flute part isn't acrobatic. Plus, it's on YouTube, meaning you can enjoy it at any time.

The first movement is "November Landscapes," and it's set in A major, broadly in 3/4 time, but with excursions into 6/8 that put a veritable skip in one's step. The guitar part is fingered in just about the right amount of detail and it's gloriously under the fingers. Having been written a little nearer the equator than where I reside in the UK, it's perhaps not surprising that I found a warmth in the "November Landscapes" more akin to a British summer than a cold, damp British November—there's something about an A9 chord that warms my heart.

The second movement is a contrast all around, from the title ("Tell Me a Story"), through the key (mainly A minor) to the rhythm (mainly a 3:3:2). Again, the fingering is good, though the typesetting in bar 31 is a bit inconsistent.

The part scores are laid out differently, so that neither instrument has a page turn. With tempo changes and little bursts of the guitar on its own, there is so much packed into these two charming pieces. Technically this wouldn't be beyond schoolchildren, and I urge those who teach in schools to order a copy and see what I mean. **CG**

Tango (for Guitar Duo)

Carlos Gardel
(duet arrangements by Diego Collatti)
Universal, 19 pp.

Extraordinary tango duets from Argentine music great

French-Argentine singer/songwriter/actor Carlos Gardel's name is inextricably linked to the tango, and many of his works are still performed today, often arranged as guitar solos. (Cacho Tirao, best known for his work in Astor Piazzolla's group, was one of the finest interpreters of Gardel's music.) In this wonderful book, Diego Collatti has chosen five of Gardel's most famous pieces and successfully transferred them onto two guitars.

Be warned: This set is no easy stroll—both guitarists have their work cut out for them throughout these fine arrangements. "Melodia de Arrabal" is set in A minor/A with much of the melodic material given to Guitar 1 and the accompaniment often in Guitar 2, but the complexity of the rhythms and the sudden, quick-fire runs make this anything but simple. (But it's very effective.) The often-recorded "Por una Cabeza," (written with Gardel's lyricist partner, Alfredo Le Pera) is shorter, with some wonderful chromatic harmonies and a coda full of 16th notes in Guitar 2 that really need some work to get them right. "El Día Que Me Quieras," "Mi Buenos Aires Querido," and perhaps his most famous tango, "Volver," make up the rest of the volume. All are fabulous arrangements and really deserve to be played by any decent duo, as this book covers an area that I rarely see in duet guitar music.

(Tragically, Gardel and Le Pera were killed in a plane crash in Colombia in 1935.)

—Chris Dumigan

Jazzotica

Jim Ferguson
peternuttall.co.uk, 12 pages

A spirited and unpredictable three-part work

American guitarist Jim Ferguson writes interesting music often full of jazz-styled melodies and harmonies, but also with a big touch of his own personality thrown in. *Jazzotica* is in three parts, beginning with a "Fast, with Feeling" first movement consisting of an opening of syncopated chords, which continues with a run around an attractive melody with changing time signatures to give it a rhythmic lift. The jazz element is there from the start, but not in an obvious way—Ferguson's approach is more subtle and original. Some 7/8 bars provide momentum, with strummed chords and ever-changing harmonies that never go where you expect. A middle section in 5/4 briefly provides a kind of respite, until the opening ideas re-emerge and race to a coda that dies down into an anti-climactic close.

"Slow and Delicate" is a waltz idea that again sounds fresh, with some delicious harmonic work and unusual juxtaposition of harmonies, while the final "Spirited and Constant" is completely in 4/4, with a bouncy melody surrounded by syncopations and a number of technical flights of fancy that need careful attention to get them right. The coda begins fortissimo, with a triplet eight-note flight down the fingerboard, but again fades away unexpectedly to a quiet close on a harmonic.

This is a first-class piece of writing, effortlessly individual and constantly musical and engaging. It takes a good player to do it justice, but lesser talents will also enjoy trying to wrap their heads around this fine, entertaining work.

—CD

Imminent Loss (for Guitar Quartet)

Quartet (for Guitar Quartet)

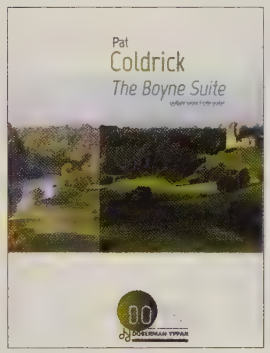
Eddie Healy
Les Productions d'Oz, Loss: 8 pp. plus parts; Quartet 3 pp. plus parts

Two from a fine Texas-based composer-guitarist

Written for Texas' Collin College One O'Clock Guitar Ensemble, "Imminent Loss" opens with a punchy rhythm that builds across all four forces. Set in F♯ minor, the time signature changes occasionally, but nothing too scary, and the harmony is dark but hypnotic rather than discordant—good use is made of the very low E♯ to bring the music back to the tonic. This is accessible without being trite and simple, and is rather fun, with short little solo breaks that have an improvisational feel. The score is clearly marked "solo" and "tutti" for use when played by more than four guitarists. There are a variety of textures, and technically the piece is probably no more complex than about Grade Six.

"Quartet" in 2/2 time (with one bar in 2/4 time) is perhaps best suited to a mixed-ability ensemble, with Guitar 4 being Grade One, Guitar 3 perhaps Grade

Three (on account of some fifth position work and some half barres). Guitar 2 has a little double-stopping in the lowest two positions (but is no harder), and Guitar 1 has faster notes and forays into the ninth position, but a Grade Four player would not struggle. It has a leisurely pace and some lovely, light, jazzy chords; the texture is one of smooth openness and relaxation. With the two repeats and the laid-back pace, the music lasts about two minutes, and it's an enjoyable sound that novice players might not have seen in many of the pieces written for a modest standard.—*DH*

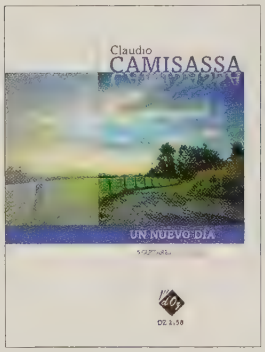


The Boyne Suite
Pat Coldrick
Doberman-Yppan, 16 pp.

Waltzes and more from respected Irish guitarist-composer

There is much to commend here, including the beautiful, eye-catching front cover featuring an idyllic country landscape. All four of the movements which make up this suite are very well-written; the music has immediate appeal, is very playable, and easy on the ear.

The opening "Reverie" is a waltz with a pretty and memorable tune. The second piece, titled "Wake Unto Me," is a slower waltz that displays shades of the influence of Irish harpist Turlough O'Carolan. A third waltz, this time with a passing nod to the music of Venezuela, and especially the music of Antonio Lauro, comes with the delightful "Serenade." And the whole set is brought to a conclusion in grand style with Pat Coldrick's splendid Latin-influenced "Cayendo," a highly energetic and exciting piece of writing. The music is clearly notated and the fingering, if followed, works well (the exception being in bar 23 of "Cayendo," where a full barre at fret five could surely be held on for the next couple of bars for convenience). For players of the intermediate standard, this could be a little gem in their repertoire. —*Steve Marsh*

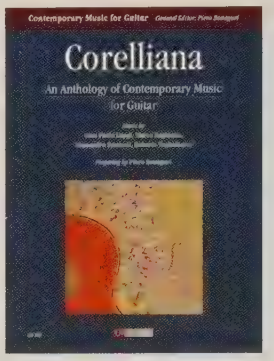


In Nuevo Dia (for Guitar Quintet)
Claudio Camisassa
Les Productions d'Oz, 10 pp. plus parts

An intriguing musical portrait of daybreak

Marked "misterioso," Guitar 5 opens in A minor with a slow pizzicato bass line, joined by Guitar 4, adding sustain to the "footsteps" and two more guitars providing chords above the bass. The melody, when it enters, is sad, set over slightly dark chords, symbolizing the darkness before day. The harmonic is eerie rather than dissonant. Yet, there is movement in the tune, and as the pizzicato drops away, an increasing sense of urgency emerges, more from restless chords than from a change of pace or volume. The sun breaks through as the music is marked "romantico," and a strong melody in A major sings out over a South American bassline and some striking natural harmonics—glorious writing with a sense of space and a refreshing texture.

A return to the minor key soon follows—can this be British weather we're writing about? Not at all; there is a cunning mixture of threes and twos and the music here is moving forward at a more brisk pace, through some luscious key changes, before finally returning to the opening theme, which is modified to conclude with a powerful ending back in the minor key. This is not a work for an inexperienced quintet, yet not too technically advanced. It's more that each line is rhythmically independent of the others, so a certain resilience is needed that a novice ensemble might not have. In terms of complexity, Guitar 5 is probably Grade Three. Each of the parts above has its own challenges. —*DH*



Corelliana: An Anthology of Contemporary Music for Guitar
Four pieces by Gian Paolo Luppi, Marco Reghezza, Alessandro Spazzoli, and Roberto Tagliamacco
Ut Orpheus, 20 pp.

Baroque composer inspires superb modern pieces

This book celebrates the life of Baroque composer Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713). Gian Paolo Luppi's piece "Alcor" is in one movement consisting of two main sections—a largo that has no bar lines and moves around rapidly in whole tone, and an allegro with a very athletic feel. Marco Reghezza's "Fuga Dodecatonale on a Theme by Corelli" is a remarkable fugue with a gripping forward thrust, derived from the "Pastorale" of *Corelli's Concerto Grosso, Op. 6 No. 8.* The harmonies are friendly and the part-writing imaginative and adventurous; the cumulative effect is a real joy.

Alessandro Spazzoli's "Sarabanda All'Alba" has a 3/2 time signature and consists entirely of chords, with largely traditional harmonies, but also a few gentle clashes along the way. One or two of the chords need a very large hand, but otherwise this is another fine, playable work. The final piece is Roberto Tagliamacco's *Concerto per la Notte di Corelli,* which, with some unusually spaced chords, albeit highly tonal, make me wonder whether this man is not a guitar player. It is a highly idiosyncratic item and tricky to play, but also very effective.

All four of these pieces are big, dramatic, and different from one another in style, but each in its own way is well worth the effort. A superb volume in every way. —*CD*

Gnossiennes After Erik Satie (for Guitar Quartet)

Stephen Goss
Doberman-Yppan, 24 pp.

Goss captures Satie's spirit, and then some

The eccentric French composer Erik Satie wrote his six *Gnossiennes* for piano toward the last decade of the 19th century; the word itself was invented by Satie, probably in reference to the Greek word *gnosis*, which is related to spiritual knowledge.

Stephen Goss has taken Nos. 2, 3, and 4 of the *Gnossiennes* and reinvented them for four guitars, putting quite a lot of himself in these superb presentations. Although they have the Goss stamp on them, they still manage to retain the original characteristics—one acknowledges the original composer here; it is as if Satie has been brought "up to date." The atmosphere Goss manages to cleverly instill in this "simple" music—utilizing cross-rhythms, string brushing, harmonics, and plentiful dynamic instructions—is quite astounding.

In 1897, Satie's friend, Claude Debussy, orchestrated two of the three *Gymnopédies* (composed by Satie just prior to his *Gnossiennes*) and almost as a "bonus track," Goss has included his arrangement for guitar quartet based upon those orchestrations.

Again, these are very attractive arrangements and work extremely well in this format.

Both the original *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes* are widely known and performed (justifiably so) and these new presentations deserve a wide audience, too. It's likely the great man would have strongly approved of these magnificent pieces. Technically, each part is not that difficult on its own; the hard part is piecing together the four lines and producing the high musicianship required to make this music work. —*SM*

Le Rues De Marciac (for Guitar Quintet)

Thierry Tisserand
Les Productions d'Oz, 8 pp. plus parts

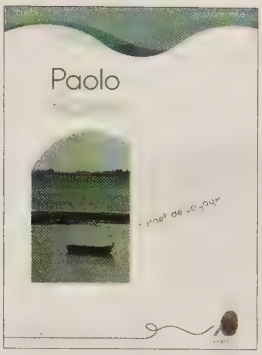
Don't be afraid of a little jazz

Set in shuffle rhythm, this piece will quickly separate guitarists with an innate sense of rhythm and the ability to "feel the beat" from those (dare I say more "classical" players) who regard the score as a fixed list of timed jobs, and who should look away now. We're left with those who love a bluesy, big-band saunter through the score. We're in for some fun.

Guitar 4 starts off with a jazzy little motif that invites Guitar 5 to join in an octave lower. Metallic discords, with a punchy staccato, give a clue that there's more on the way, and it arrives, courtesy of Guitar 1, shadowed a sixth below by Guitar 2. And here is the basic orchestration—a tune and harmony line together, rich chords built by Guitars 3 and 4, and a bassline that is partly chord-based and partly a walking bassline. There are glissandi starting on the offbeat, and the mix of missing beats and lugubrious triplet quarter notes over normal quarter notes make this a feast of fun rhythms. The music—just 99 bars—has no repeats, so this runs for almost exactly three minutes at the marked metronome speed.

How hard is it? It needs players who feel the beat, and if pared back to one player per part, every player has to be able to play a pizzicato solo in the finale, so it's confidence more than ability that is needed.

A mixed ability ensemble between Grade Three and Six will enjoy it. —*DH*



Carnet de Voyage

Paolo Rosini
Editions L'Empreinte Melodique, 20 pp.

Ten varied pieces are perfect for budding guitarists

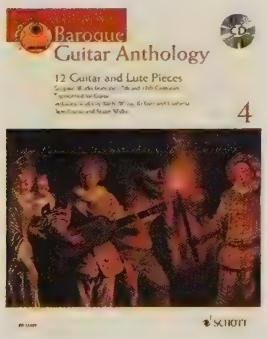
This Italian composer has produced a set of ten pieces the publisher states is around Grades One and Two, and in a variety of styles. So, for example, there is a nod toward the blues in a couple of pieces—notably "Song for Julia," with its gentle syncopations, glissandi notes, and some fills you might hear an electric guitarist play, or the following "Blueswing," which has an attractive rolling gait in a style that, for a lesser composer, could have produced a hackneyed result, but which here turns out to be fresh and original. The amusing "Aubade," with its 3/4–6/8 cross-rhythms and cheeky, sudden key changes, had me smiling at its audacity, while the folk-like rhythms of "Homesickness" morph into a 5/4 piece just to add a slice of originality. Another highlight is the lovely arpeggio-driven "Country Prelude." But every piece is well worth playing, even if one or two seem a tad harder than Grades One or Two. That is my only slight complaint about this fine, well-written set of pieces ideal for less able players, a feat which not every composer is capable of doing successfully. —*CD*

Les Doux Instants

Claude Gagnon
Les Productions D'Oz, 4 pp.

Short and sweet; perhaps too much

This is a very pretty, lyrical, composition with mostly predictable melodic and harmonic progressions, but that is not necessarily a bad attribute. The tune is romantic/sentimental and although it shifts quite high up the fingerboard, the technical standard remains within the grasp of the Grade Four player (but watch out for the one unexpected moment in bar 28, where a sudden left hand large stretch is called for). It's a bit "sugary" for my taste, but nevertheless an attractive work one could easily slot into the student-concert or restaurant-music category. *—SM*



Baroque Guitar Anthology 4: 12 Guitar and Lute Pieces

Schott, 36 pp. (plus CD)

A dozen beautifully presented Baroque pieces

Here is the final volume in this series, with works from both the Baroque guitar (Corbetta), and the Baroque lute (Weiss, Kellner, Straube, Durant), and pieces by Bach originally for other instruments, all aimed at the higher Grades Seven to Eight. The music is first-class, and as a bonus, there are plenty of notes to help you out with the background to the pieces.

Of course, with Baroque guitar and lute pieces, there are inevitable problems with faithfully translating what was written for the original instrument onto a modern six-string classical guitar, but the actual transcriptions are extremely well done, and every one of the works is a worthwhile performance piece, with a fair number of them not seen too often in compilations such as these.

As with all Schott publications, the book is of the highest quality. *—CD*

Chansons et Danses du Languedoc (for two guitars)

Arnaud Sans
Editions L'Empreinte Melodique, score only 20 pp..

Nine easy duets from French folk melodies

The French region of Languedoc's folk melodies are famous for their beauty, and in this set, Arnaud Sans has made nine easy duets inspired by that beauty. Guitar 1's part is often easier than Guitar 2's and always carries the melody line, while the accompaniment is reserved for Guitar 2.

The parts are melodic and pleasant, but also a little lacking, as they aren't particularly adventurous in their harmonies and, in spite of their rustic origins, sound a little "safe."

Perhaps making the duets on the easier side meant sacrificing one or two elements that might have improved them. However, I could easily see younger players getting some fun out of this little set. *—CD*

Orchestersuite No. 2 BWV 1067 (for Guitar Quartet)

J.S. Bach, arr. Petros Kampourakis
Are Edition, 39 pp. plus parts

A Bach dance suite uniquely arranged for quartet (or more)

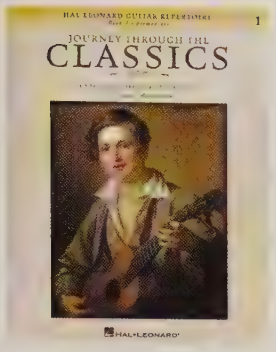
The work is actually for a quartet or large ensemble, and there are solo and tutti sections. The book contains a mass of explanatory text in German and English, with a gushing foreword by Eliot Fisk and an informative introduction from the arranger, together with colored facsimiles of the original scrawl. (I say "scrawl" because the original is really not easy on the eyes!)

The music consists of an "Ouvertüre" with a difficult page turn, a "Rondeau," a "Sarabande," two "Bourrées," a "Polonaise and Double," a "Menuet," and a "Badinerie."

As in the well-known Lute Suites, there is a mix of slow, fast, and decorative, but here the writing, of course, is monophonic. Although the rhythm, speed, and ornaments remain a challenge, the music is at least technically easier.

Even so, the ensemble needs to be quite competent, though there is nothing that a good amateur group would find impossible, The foreword urges a "figured-bass" approach to filling some of the long notes where the guitar's sustain means that the music tends to fade away, so there is a chance to extemporize—a word that fills many modern guitarists with horror, though many players in Bach's time would have loved to put their own mark on a well-known piece.

As a concept, this is not particularly out of the ordinary, but the attention to detail and the supporting material make this a fascinating read. *—DH*



Journey Through the Classics: 32 Essential Masterworks (Book 1, Elementary)
Compiled and Edited by John Hill
Hal Leonard, 48 pp.

An excellent "learner's" compendium for budding guitarists

Here is a book of elementary pieces, roughly presented in order of difficulty, designed to lead beginners through the classics. Nothing in the book is by any stretch difficult, and it would be ideal for players new to the repertoire. There is wide range of composers and styles, including de Visee, Sanz, Carulli, Fernando Sor, and Mauro Giuliani, and additionally a large collection of folk song arrangements from Wales, Spain, Ireland, England, and the United States. There is no really modern material here, but as much of that tends to be more advanced in difficulty, there is plenty of time for students to be introduced to such music a little later on. These pieces are in both standard notation and tab, and include right- and left-hand fingerings.

There are certainly lots of books of this type around, so the competition is huge, but the volume does the job nicely and might be an ideal book to supplement students' lessons. *—CD*

Ferdinando Carulli

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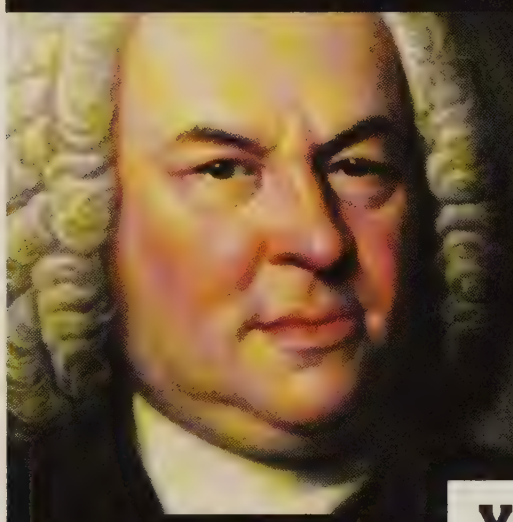
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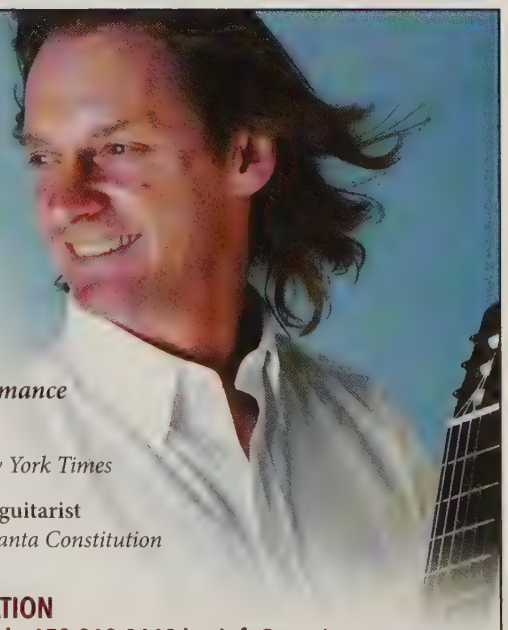
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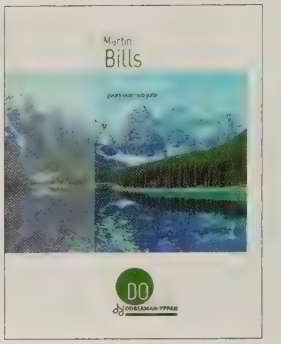

Folk Suite
Martin Bills
Doberman-Yppan, 24pp.

An enjoyable set with echoes of Scotland and Ireland

The five movements that make up this entertaining and cleverly constructed composition are contrasting and imaginative, all written with a folky slant, as the title implies. Although it apparently was the final one to be penned, "County Choro" begins the set in a stylish and entertaining manner, with a movement incorporating the vigor and rhythms of Latin America fused with a few nods toward jazz/folk styles. "Angel's Turn," which follows, has to be the highlight of the set. This is a slow, beautiful "air," the composer tells us, written while he was on holiday in Scotland, so it seems likely that the Highlands provided some of the inspiration behind this one.

The folky theme of the "Fugato" has an unmistakably cheery, optimistic disposition, and the piece develops in a mainly two-voiced fashion for nearly 50 bars before concluding with a lively folk-dance in the style of a Scottish reel. The final two movements are "Celtic Ballad," a work heavily inspired by the harp music of the Baroque Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan, and "Spring Dance," a lengthy (seven-page) foot-tapper which brings the set to a magnificent conclusion.

This is a most enjoyable work which would easily fit into the formal concert repertoire. The standard needed for a decent performance is high, around the Grade Eight mark. —*SM*

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A Different Kind of Clip-On Mic

IK Multimedia's iRig Acoustic is a new-gen, inexpensive, nearly flat clip-on mic/interface that attaches easily at the soundhole and can be plugged in via a 1/8-inch jack directly into an iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, Mac, or Android device to achieve clean, direct recordings without a conventional microphone. It requires no batteries or outside power, and it is also fully compatible with IK's AmpliTube Acoustic app, which allows for various FX, if desired. Most classical players will probably prefer the iRig Acoustic's unadulterated "colorless" signal, however. List: $49.99. ikmultimedia.com

iRig Acoustic mic

A Fine Guitar Support Gets Better

Hamre Music's popular, hand-crafted NeckUp Guitar Support is not new, of course, but it has been improved in the past year, with subtle changes to its vinyl suction cup that has increased the overall stability of the item, and it also now employs a slightly firmer grade of leather. The NeckUp is still highly adjustable, from level to more than 45 degrees. The new NeckUp 2-Inch Mini is designed for smaller, child-sized, and travel instruments, but also works with larger ones. NeckUp: $49.95. Mini: $44.95. neckup.com

Aquila's Granato Flamenco Strings

The Vicenza, Italy-based Aquila Corde Armoniche has come out with a new line of strings designed specifically for flamenco guitars. The Granato series uses a proprietary approach to string construction/weight that the company claims produces a brighter and more powerful voicing across the entire fretboard in all registers, including the more insistent bass tones so critical in flamenco. Aquila's Rubino line is the standard classical-guitar equivalent. List $15. aquilacorde.com

An Advanced Humidity and Temperature Sensor

Everyone knows that temperature and humidity can wreak havoc on string instruments, so D'Addario has come up with a quick, easy, climate-monitoring system called Humiditrak (PW-HTK-01). The wireless device offers real-time temp and humidity info via Bluetooth to a free smartphone app, plus hourly, daily, and monthly data tracking—as well as push notifications when it detects hazardous conditions. It's an efficient way to keep a cautious eye on multiple instruments. Battery is included. List: $78.95. daddario.com

Antigoni Goni will perform and host a master class at the Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society Competition

FEBRUARY 24–28
Miami International GuitART Festival and Composition Competition
Miami, Florida
The MIGF festival, at Florida International University's School of Music, features performances, master classes, lectures, a luthier's expo, composer's panel, and, most intriguing, a composer's competition. Concert participants include Benjamin Verdery, Robert Trent, Stephen Aron, John Schneider, Turkey's Trio Anka, the Cuban duo Con-Trastes, Miami Guitar Trio, festival founder and artistic director Mesut Ozgen, and others. There will also be a Student Showcase Concert. The composition competition will solicit entries for solo, duo, or trio pieces, in two different age categories. **migf.org**

MARCH 7–11
16th Culiacan International Guitar Festival
Culiacan, Mexico
The Centro Cultural Genaro Estrada in this historic northwest Mexico city will host open and child competitions, plus concerts and master classes featuring David Russell, Zoran Dukic, Mabell Milán, and Jose Alfredo Amezcua; and more. **internationalguitarculiacan.com**

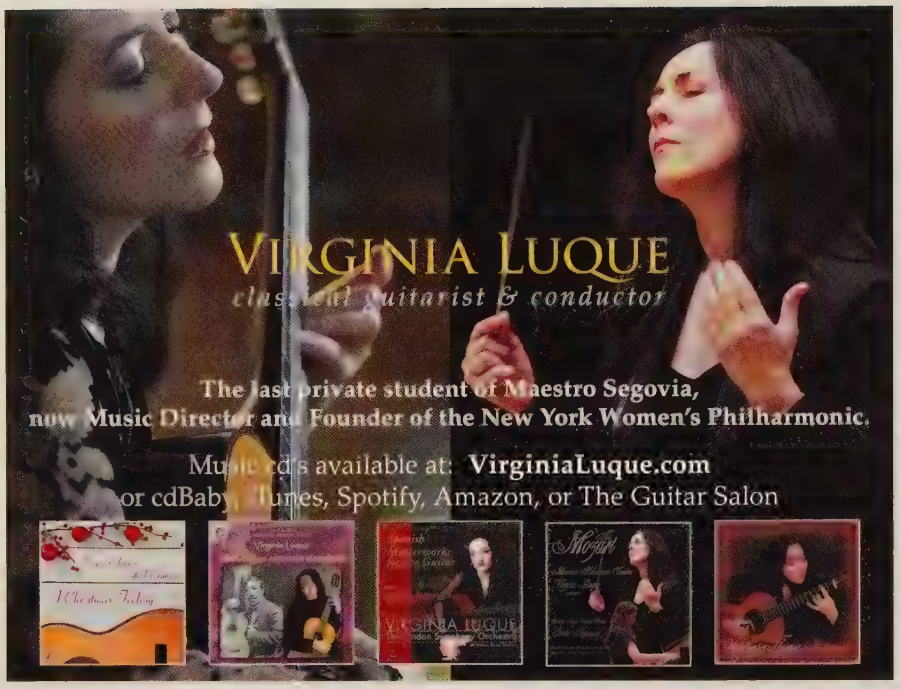
MARCH 23
18th Ivor Mairants Guitar Award
London, England
Applications for this year's competition are due February 26. Requirements this year include any work or movement from *Jazz Sonatas for Guitar* (Mel Bay) and one of five selected pieces by Berkeley. Castelnuovo-Tedesco, McLeod, Ponce, or Sculthorpe.
wcom.org.uk/news-events/awards

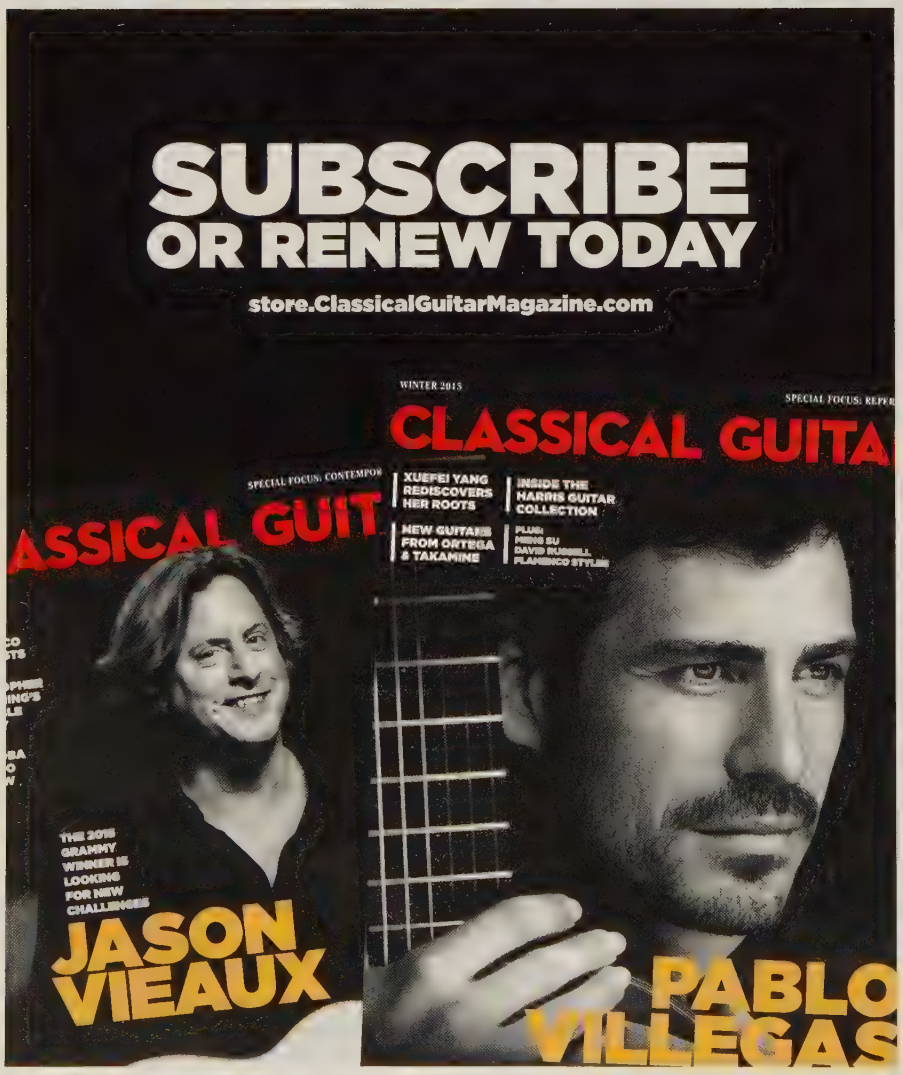
MARCH 25–27
Guitares Au Beffroi International Festival
Montrouge, France
March 25 is the classical guitar day of this festival held in a Paris suburb, with the final round of *Guitare Classique* magazine's competition; a flamenco master class with Manuel Delgado, a concert by Valérie Duchâteau, a tribute to composer Francois de Fossa, a luthier fair, and more. **guitaresaubeffroi.com**

MARCH 30–APRIL 1
17th Concours International de Guitare
Antony, France
All-ages and nationalities competitions. A new piece written for the competition will be featured (among others). **ville-antony.fr/imprimer/international-guitar-competition**

APRIL 1–3
Northwest Guitar Festival
Moscow, Idaho
Three days at the Lionel Hampton School of Music on the U. of Idaho campus. Festival artists include Michael Nicolella, South Hill Guitars, Oregon Guitar Quartet, David Feingold, Michael Videon, and others. Adult and youth competitions. Guitar orchestra workshops, master classes, and more. **northwestguitarfestival.org**

APRIL 9–10
Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society Competition
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
The first day of the festival at the Trinity Center for Urban Life is highlighted by a concert by Antigoni Goni, who hosts a master class the next day. Also, many competition recitals and concerts, vendor's fair, and more. **phillyguitar.org**





FESTIVALS & COMPETITIONS

APRIL 13–17
Long Island Guitar Festival
Brookville, New York
The 24th LIGFwill feature concerts by Andrew York, Berta Rojas, David Starobin, lutenist Ronn McFarlane, Hilary Field, and others. Also, the National High School Classical Guitar Competition, master classes, and more.
liu.edu/gfest

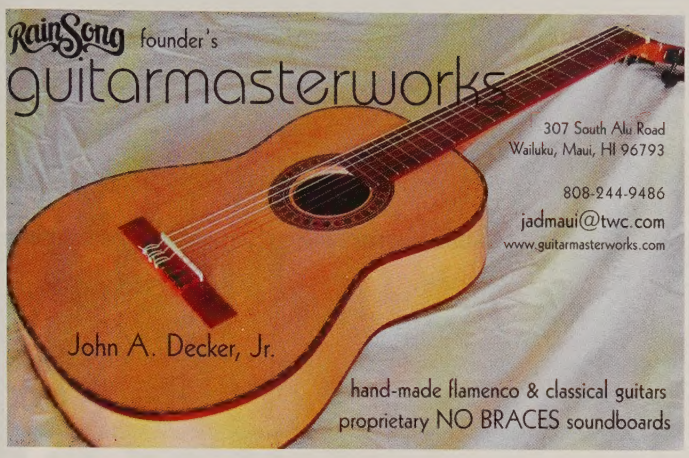
APRIL 15–17
Toronto Guitar Weekend
Toronto, Canada
Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Celso Machado, Steve Cowan; vendor fair, master classes, lectures, and more.
guitarsocietyoftoronto.com

APRIL 26
Young Artists Classical Guitar Competition
Douglaston, New York
The Tuesday Morning Music Club is sponsoring this bi-annual competition for guitarists ages 18–28, for which entry submissions must be received by March 14. Six contestants will then vie for prize money on April 26. For details go to:
guitarfoundation.org

MAY 9–16
Koblenz International Guitar Festival
Koblenz, Germany
Always one of Europe's premier guitar fests, this one will again feature concerts, master classes, an open competition, workshops and lectures. Just a few on the huge artist roster: Pepe Romero, Manuel Barrueco, Marco Socias. Zoran Dukic, Göran Söllscher, David Russell, Paul O'Dette, Liying Zhu, Gabriel Blanco.
koblenzguitarfestival.de

JUNE 8–11
JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition
Buffalo, New York
The application deadline for this prestigious bi-annual competition is April 1. Guitarists submit a CD of them playing one (or two) of nine concertos (by Brouwer, Villa-Lobos, Ponce, Rodrigo, et al.), plus other pieces. Semifinalists to be notified by April 20; semifinals during June competition. Complete info on the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra site: **bpo.org**

MARKETPLACE & ADVERTISER INDEX



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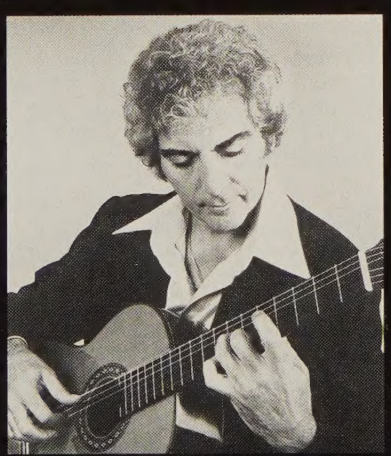
'SOME PEOPLE IN THE GUITAR WORLD CAN BE QUITE SNOBBISH WHEN IT COMES TO ARRANGING POPULAR MUSIC FOR THE GUITAR. I SAY, WHY NOT? WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS?



What I did to arrange these pieces [by George Gershwin and Leonard Bernstein] was listen to them as if it was the very first time, as if I'd never heard them before. I listened closely to the melody. People later told me they thought these pieces sounded as if they'd originally been written for the guitar, which was a very nice compliment!

—JORGE MOREL

From a story by Julia Crowe
Classical Guitar August 2006

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